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The Author,
The Rev. J. Osgood,
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GOD WITH MEN:

OR

FOOTPRINTS OF PROVIDENTIAL LEADERS.

BY

SAMUEL OSGOOD,

AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY," ETC.

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

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1853.

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P R E F A C E .

THE papers which compose this volume were written in order to give the young people of the author's parish some idea of the course of Divine Revelation through the representative characters of both dispensations. He has tried to state some of the results of his studies of Biblical literature and Church history, without cumbering his pages with philological discussions or scholastic theorizing. He hopes that the volume will be useful enough to justify the request of friends for its publication. If it should be thought useful in the parish or the family library, — if it should assist parents or teachers in explaining to inquiring youth the rise and progress of true religion among men, — or if any earnest seeker should find a single ray of light shining from its pages upon topics quite as often darkened by bigotry as by unbelief, the author's time and trouble will not have been in vain.

It seems as if every man who publishes a book now-a-days should apologize for adding his cup to the general deluge of print. But the very frequency

of book-making brings in part its own apology, since any one who now ventures before the public needs not even say that he is no candidate for reputation or even for remembrance. Every reasonable writer should be content if his production succeed only as the summer fruit, which is refreshing and nutritious to some persons for a single season, and may leave a few seeds to germinate in a not unfriendly soil.

The author cannot close this Preface without referring affectionately to a most estimable parishioner, — that high-minded merchant and consistent Christian, Edward Wight of New York, — who requested, some time before his lamented decease, that these papers might be laid before the public, from his own convictions of their probable usefulness.

NEW YORK, *September 7, 1853.*

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. ABRAHAM AND THE EMPIRE OF FAITH	1
II. MOSES AND THE LAW	14
III. AARON AND THE PRIESTHOOD	39
IV. SAUL AND THE THRONE	57
V. DAVID AND THE PSALMS	77
VI. SOLOMON AND THE HEBREW WISDOM	98
VII. ISAIAH AND THE PROPHETS	115
VIII. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE PRECURSORS OF THE MESSIAH :	137
IX. THE MESSIAH IN HIS PREPARATION AND PLAN	153
X. THE MESSIAH IN HIS MINISTRY	168
XI. PETER AND THE KEYS	185
XII. PAUL AND GOSPEL LIBERTY	201
XIII. JOHN AND THE WORD	217
XIV. THE DISCIPLES AND THE UNSEEN WITNESS	238
XV. THE THEOLOGIAN AND THE WORLD TO COME	251

I.

ABRAHAM AND THE EMPIRE OF FAITH.

WESTERN ASIA is well called, not only the geographical centre of the human race, but also the "spiritual centre," the "cradle of man's moral nature." The history of civilization is little more than the narrative of the tribes who have started from the table-lands beyond the Euphrates, and carried empire with them in their march towards the West. All in turn have been called to contribute their portion to the heritage now becoming the common property of mankind; and we are graceless heirs if we are forgetful of our ancestry. The Phœnicians became the representatives of the commercial spirit, — the Greeks, of taste in literature and the beautiful arts, — the Romans, of law and dominion, — and the Northern or Germanic tribes, of the spirit of individual liberty. But the magnificent drama of civilization would be sadly incomplete, if these races, with their peculiar heroes, had been left to work out the future of humanity alone. There is an empire in the world that rests upon far other agencies than Grecian arts or Roman arms, — an empire of faith, whose triumph every age has in some measure illustrated. In this, the Hebrew race has from the first borne the palm, and its proph-

ets are the leaders of the hopes of mankind. The founder of the Hebrew people deserves his name, "father of the faithful," and his posterity are already as the stars of heaven.

It was probably no very strange spectacle to the nomad tribes who roamed the rich plains around the Euphrates, when they caught sight of the migrating party headed by the father of nations. To all appearance, the same thing had been of frequent occurrence, as want or enterprise tempted the residents of old settlements towards less populous lands. Most conspicuous was the line of camels who bore the tents and goods of the party, whilst around them, a less distinguishable mass, moved the flocks. The venerable emir who conducts the march, in company with his wife and nephew, might be easily singled out, as he sits upon his dromedary in quiet thought, or converses with his relatives, or gives orders to the servants who have charge of the flocks. It must soon have appeared, however, that no slight or capricious purpose dictated the movement. Forward, day after day, and week after week, the party proceeded, and found no permanent rest until they encamped in Canaan, the land to which, by a providential impulse, the leader had been called.

Pause a moment, and consider the significance of this man's entrance into that country. All that was in his own mind we cannot know, nor is there good reason to believe that, at the time, he had a very clear idea of the extent of his mission. He was a man of very devout convictions, but by no means indifferent to worldly prosperity; and the double purpose of rescuing his family from the rising idolatry of his Chal-

dean neighbors, and of providing for his posterity a more congenial home, prepared him to listen to the mysterious voice that bade him turn his face toward the Mediterranean shores. As he obeyed the voice, and entered the land to which it called him, his destiny dawned upon him yet more clearly. When the patriarch halted his company in the beautiful valley of Moreh, in Samaria, and built an altar to Jehovah, in that scene he virtually expressed the majestic future of his name and race. Between those mountains, twenty centuries afterwards, He who sat at the well, and discoursed of the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth, was but developing the meaning of Abram's creed and prayer. The mighty men and races of the earth knew nothing of the event, nor could they have understood its significance. The Nimrods and Pharaohs would have cared little for any of the doings of the patriarch and his family. Yet by that act of worship in Canaan he founded an empire of faith, which has stood ages after their glory has passed away. The future of the whole human race rested with him who came out from the growing superstitions of his kindred, and established the worship of Jehovah, the one God, the Eternal Spirit, to whom every idol is an abomination.

I need not enter into the particulars of the patriarch's life, nor spend many words in trying to distinguish between the mythical and historical in the narrative. The whole story has been familiar to us from childhood, and we need only call attention to two or three points which illustrate the providential plans in his mission.

Take a glance at his fortunes during his residence at Mamre. The traveller in that fertile valley, near

Hebron, and not far from the Dead Sea, is even now asked to visit the terebinth-tree which shaded the patriarch's tent, and under whose branches he invited the three angels to refresh themselves. In Mamre he lived after his visit to Egypt, and the peaceful industry of the pastoral chieftain's encampment was interrupted at one time by a summons to take part with his nephew Lot and the neighboring chiefs against the Assyrian invaders, and again by the mysterious visitants who came to warn him of the fate of the cities of the plain. During the many years of his residence in Mamre, his mind was much exercised with religious impressions, and heavenly influences combined with his own anxious questionings to set him at rest. As he returned from his victories to his childless tent, the enigma of his destiny must have been obscurer than ever, as he thought of the passing of his inheritance into the line of a stranger. The promise, however, did not fail him; and one night, as he was looking upon the cloudless heavens, the heavenly voice bids him count the stars, and be assured that so numerous shall his offspring be. He yielded his soul in perfect trust in his Divine Protector. He solemnized the visitation by an act of sacrifice, and as he sat guarding the altar from birds of prey until evening came, he interpreted the vision which came over him as the acceptance of the offering, and heard the promise which afterwards led him to take the name of Abraham, the father of nations. More specific his future now appeared to him, and he was to mark the race that were to spring from him with a sign of the covenant with God.

Years afterward, we find him at Beersheba, at the extreme south of Canaan, whither he had gone appar-

ently after the fearful convulsions of nature among the cities of the plain. In that region the child of promise was born, and the exile of Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, identified with the birth of Isaac the founding of the Arabian race, and in time led to the rise of the Mahometan religion. The clearest and most impressive idea of the patriarch's life at Beersheba is furnished by the account of his place of worship. Indicating his desire and expectation to spend the remainder of his days in the place, he planted a grove of trees, and built an altar under their shade. Thus the grove was his first temple, and the choice indicates in the patriarch a sentiment of the beautiful, as well as a spirit of devotion. He who has known what it is to look with love upon the trees under which he has rested and meditated and worshipped, and who has seen in their rising branches Nature's chronicle of his own changing years, — emblems, too, of the protecting arms of Divine Providence, — cannot be a stranger to the feeling of this tender-hearted, firm old man, as he knelt with his family before Jehovah in the grove which his own hands had planted.

One fearful trial broke the quiet of his later years. The Scripture records the fact without giving the particulars of the mental conflict. The Jewish doctors reckon ten trials of Abraham's faith, the whole culminating with the terrible ordeal which led him from Beersheba to Moriah. Here, with the proposed sacrifice of Isaac, we approach ground as controverted as it is familiar. That there are great difficulties in the passage we cannot deny. It must seem to us a dreadful trial of affection to call a parent to consent to sac-

ricise his own son. Yet the difficulty lessens as we ponder well upon the subject, and they who say that the story makes their flesh creep with horror, and is one of the darkest legends of superstition, need only to think again, to find in the transaction traits of tender humanity, as well as of devout submission. Remember that the Divine method of teaching is rather by deeds than by words, and, viewed in connection with the Divine Being who ruled the issue, the whole scene is to be regarded as a practical parable, teaching as language cannot do the great lesson that we must be ready to surrender at God's bidding our best treasures, our goods, our lives, our kindred, nay, our only child, and that when we attain this state of mind, God will not leave us desolate, but will provide for us beyond our thought. Own God's hand in this deed, and it teaches resignation and promises deliverance. Recognize in the event the action of human feeling under providential guidance, and further light breaks in upon the darkness. Who that is acquainted with the history of religion does not know how deep and powerful is the idea of sacrifice that has moved devout minds, and how readily devotees have felt themselves prompted to immolate themselves and their offspring upon the altars of their Gods. The patriarch was evidently subdued by a sense of the Divine power and goodness, and led to ask what more he might do to please God. Moved in part, perhaps, by the customs of the nations around him, and in part by the rightful conviction of his obligation to God, he found himself haunted by the passion to perform some crowning act of sacrifice. What is there incredible in the thought, that this state of mind was divinely ruled for

good, and this sacrificial spirit brought to a result which at once proved its submissiveness and rebuked the custom of shedding human blood? The race of Abraham learned for ever from this event, that God asks not for human victims, and a religion of mercy teaches humanity and piety from this drama of terror. He believed that God would educe good from the trial, and could raise Isaac from the dead. The sequel exhibited the merciful character of the Jehovah of the Hebrews, in striking contrast with the divinities of the idolaters in the neighborhood. Then came the crowning promise, that in his seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, — a promise spoken upon the spot trodden two thousand years afterwards by the feet of the Son of Man, and near the place where the Lamb of God bled for the sins of the world.

Later in life the patriarch was led, probably by attachment to his first permanent home, to return to the valley of Mamre, and years afterwards Abraham was borne from his pleasant tents to the burial-place at Machpelah, whither Sarah had gone before. At his funeral, his favored heir, Isaac, and the bondwoman's son, Ishmael, met together in peace, — they, the founders of two mighty races, forgetting their estrangement at their father's grave. Thus the history of the patriarch in Canaan ends as simply as it began; the scene that opened with that first act of worship to Jehovah in a strange country, ends with that primitive funeral at the cemetery purchased of the children of Heth.

Of the man thus presented, and of his mission to the world, we must now speak. His is the oldest name generally preserved in the memory of men, and he is the first distinct historical personage who leads

the vast procession of races and empires. He stands at the head of the traditions, usages, and annals of a host of various nations. Jew, Christian, and Mahometan alike look back to him. Fables without number have been connected with his history, and all the wonders of magic and astrology have been ascribed to him. Scepticism, too, has been quite as extravagant as superstition, and has in its various hypotheses exhibited the patriarch as a pagan demigod, an allegorical personage, the genius of a star, the chief of a school of Magi. But above all these extravagances the father of the faithful rises in his filial submission and simple dignity, and claims our respect and love as the friend of God and man. The power of his character was mainly in his faith. In this respect is he not the precursor of the line of heroes who have been strong in God? Think of his faith, not as a weak credulity, but as the reliance of what was deepest in his soul upon what is true and holy in God, and we understand something of its power. Say what he believed and how he believed, and we recognize at once the strength of his nature and the ground of his trust. In what he believed we have the truth of truths, the unity and universality of God, a truth which Moses and Christ only more fully developed. To understand how deeply he believed, we must remember that all true faith contains within itself the germs of an infinite progress, and the implicit trust of Abraham needed only development to make it the explicit faith in Christ. Remember how wavering are the opinions of men, and how ready, even with our clearer light, to bow to idols of their own device, and we cannot inadequately appreciate the heroism of the man who

came boldly out from his kindred, renounced their many superstitions, and in the infancy of nations founded in his own family the empire of faith.

That he was a perfect character, it would be folly to say, quite as unjustified by Scripture as by reason. It is needless sophistry to try to free him from the charge of equivocating, and we leave it to the men who have never colored the truth to favor their own purposes to cast the first stone at the chief who in a rude age sought to protect his family from royal violence by a stratagem. He was a man of tender affections, and if sometimes too ready to acquiesce in harsh measures to make peace in his home, his own dispositions were uniformly kind in all his relations with his kindred and neighbors. He was faithful in his alliances and honorable in his dealings, — brave in danger, and proving by his generous surrender of proffered booty that the protection of friends, not the wealth of foes, had led him to take arms. The Scriptures of both Testaments celebrate his worth. Moses and Christ speak of the God of Abraham, — the one in consummation of the Law, the other in proof of the Gospel of immortality. Words cannot say more than Christ's did when he spoke of Abraham's joy in seeing his day, of the meeting of all the faithful with him in the kingdom of God, and in his own use of the familiar phrase that gave the patriarch's name to the place of rest for departed souls.

But we must ask distinctly, What is this man to us now, or what has been his mission to our race? We must certainly acknowledge a providential plan in human history, and nothing can be more absurd than to see a divine purpose in the structure of a plant or

a human body, and to own no guiding purpose in that great drama in which man and nature combine. History is but the record of Providence, and the providential plan is most clearly manifested in the men who are called to the most exalted work. What is so exalted as religion, or that which decides man's relations with his Maker? How can we dismiss from our thought the personage who gathered up the precious truths that had been handed down from the very beginning, and saved from the rising confusion, the chief idea and the chief solace of our race, the unity of God and the promise of redemption? This sacred trust, so likely to be lost, and so sure to be confounded with superstition if left to casual guardianship, thus became the mission of a single family, who made it the property of a nation and then of the whole race. The choice of the place as well as of the man was providential, — the place a central region situated at almost equal distances from three continents, upon the borders of Upper Asia, the very source of human society, and upon the coast of the great sea whose banks have been the theatre of ancient civilization. There the patriarch kept his precious charge, whilst the great movements were in progress that were to illustrate by their conflicting extremes the tendencies against which he protested. They that started from the great central home, and peopled Eastern Asia, plunged into a dreary pantheism that sunk God in nature. They who went westward, and peopled Europe, fell into a gross polytheism that exalted men and nature into gods.

The civilization of the world is now in the hands of the children of Abraham. The Hebrew race claims

to preserve at once his faith and nationality; the Mahometan claims through Ishmael to be the heir of the patriarchal covenant; the Christian, with greater reason, professing a faith so spiritual and so comprehensive, declares that in Christ only is the great promise to be fulfilled that proclaimed blessing to all the nations of the earth.

The life of our race, like the life of the individual, has its internal and external history, and the destiny of men is divided between the things that are seen and the things that are not seen. Since Abraham's day the empire of faith and the empire of sight have been most wonderfully developed, and in every great movement the two have combined their influence,—the progress of religion being singularly coincident with the advance of civilization. That tendency towards the lands of the setting sun, which drove the patriarch to the shores of the Mediterranean, has never lost its power; it survived in Paul when he sought Rome, and in Augustine as he faced towards Britain; it was not lost when Columbus planted the Cross on the soil of a new world, or when the Mayflower dropped anchor in the harbor of Plymouth. It is moving still the earnest hearts of the world to look westward with hope, and calling myriads to build homes and altars upon the far Pacific shores. Shall we call all this movement merely material, and believe that surely in these latter days the world of matter has disenthroned the empire of faith, and men now are to look to the physical arts and sciences for all the salvation they desire, and leave spiritual concerns to dreamers and dotards?

It is not so,—it cannot be so. They are dreamers

who think of the universe of atoms without God, — they are dotards who pamper the dust as if the eternal spirit had never breathed into it a living soul. Welcome all science, but none the less keep the ancient faith. Let science be its minister, and not its foe, and both will be gainers by the union. We are desolate, whatever our triumphs, if our boasted knowledge but reveals our orphanage, and sends us, without God in the world, to a grave without hope. Praised be the heavenly mercy, that the best science has ever been the handmaid of faith, and the best arts have always sought the sanction of Him who taught the art of holy living. The Newtons, Keplers, Herschels, have looked upon the stars of heaven in a knowledge far surpassing Abraham's, yet have made no discovery that can allow them to dismiss his childlike trust in God as the beginning of wisdom and the rock of strength.

Select if we will the man gifted beyond all others in the science of nature, — sit at the feet of Humboldt, the venerable sage who has gathered the results of all physical research into a work so vast in its conception and beautiful in its plan as well to deserve to be named "Kosmos," — and who will not say that all the learning of the philosopher would be but vanity apart from the filial faith which led the patriarch to read the page of nature by a light not of this world? Nay, does not the "Kosmos" itself derive its highest charm from the gleams of a divine faith that interprets nature as a part of the book of God, not as a play of unmeaning atoms or a chain of self-existent laws?

The patriarch looked to the heavens with the natu-

ral eye and with the vision of faith. The natural eye is now schooled to see more than he saw, for the starry canopy now reveals constellations of worlds, yet are the heavens the same. The vision of faith has been quite as much enlightened, and things then dark are now opened, yet is God the same. The two worlds thus unfold themselves as time goes on. God made them both, and his plan is perfected when the domain of nature is part of the empire of faith, and the things that are seen open into the things that are not seen. The city of God then beheld coming from heaven to bless the regenerated earth, will be but the fulfilment of the great hope which led the father of the faithful to the promised land.

The God of Abraham be our God, and guide us to the better country!

II.

MOSES AND THE LAW.

THE Bible presents two dispensations of religion, in close connection with their founders. Moses, the Lawgiver, has in the Old Testament the prominence which Christ, the Saviour, has in the New. Under this broad generalization the eagle eye of St. John obviously viewed the history of Divine revelation: — “The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” We would speak now of Moses the Lawgiver: first of his life and times, then of the man, the mission, and the message.

The topic takes us at once to Egypt, — that land peerless for stately tombs and magnificent temples, — the land whose civilization was old and mature before other nations, since called to empire, had a name, — rich in arts and sciences ere Jerusalem, Tyre, Sidon, Athens, Rome, had a being, and therefore, of course, ere a single Phœnician ship parted the waters of the Mediterranean, or Solon taught, or Numa mused, or Homer sung.

“Soldiers!” said Napoleon, in a crisis of his Egyptian campaign, “forty centuries look down upon you from these Pyramids.” There was not a man in the army so dull as not to feel the power of this ma-

jestic association of ideas. But nobler far the association to the reverent student of history, who connects the monuments of antiquity with the august plans of Providence, and who deems it a far deeper inspiration that humbles man in devotion, than that which inflates him with pride. Forty centuries look down upon us from the Pyramids, and thus connect those piles of stone with all that has been most significant in the history of man. During the long interval from the first Egyptian monarch to the last, — from Menes to Mohammed Ali, — the leading men, nations, and events of the world have been intimately connected with Egypt. It is a stirring thought, that the hieroglyphics which the Champollions and Rosellini have lately interpreted after years of obscurity, were looked upon, probably, by the patriarch Abraham, when, at the head of his clan, he went to the rich country of the Nile to buy corn; afterwards by his great-grandson Joseph, who was brought as a slave to the land in which he ruled as minister of state; and afterwards, without doubt, by the illustrious man who was raised up to be the liberator of the people whose fathers had come to live in Egypt by invitation of Joseph, and had little dreamed of the bondage in store for their sons.

The Hebrews became literally the slaves of the Egyptians, and were at last as degraded in character as in condition. The pleasant pastures of Goshen, in which they had been so long permitted to live, were taken from them; and they who had loved the free, open country, and the care of flocks and herds, were obliged by a new administration, alarmed at their increasing number and power, to drudge in the

meanest of tasks and submit to the most crushing insults. It is very probable, however, that before their persecution they had fallen signally from the purity of the Abrahamic faith, and become tainted with the vices and superstitions of Egypt. Called to be guardians of the great truth of the unity of God, the children of Abraham were traitors to their high trust, and the sublime promises providentially made to the patriarch seemed destined to utter failure. That no gifted man should rise up among themselves, the king thought he took good care to insure, by ordering every male child to be put to death as soon as he found that oppression, however severe, did not thin the dreaded race, and that even in the quarry and the brick-yard, under a burning sun, they still continued to multiply. Where is the promise to Abraham, — where the hope of Israel? Her own sons are powerless, and from the Egyptians no mercy was to be expected. Truth is stranger than fiction. The oppressed people were to be delivered by one in whom the Hebrew faith and the Egyptian civilization should combine their power.

What seemed to this man probably a mere accident first revealed him to himself. The Hebrews were scattered throughout Egypt, and employed chiefly in the more burdensome tasks upon those edifices which became at once monuments of Egyptian pride and Hebrew degradation. Frequent occasions must occur in which the ill-temper of the taskmasters would vent itself in personal abuse or violence. The slave overseer is not under any circumstances proverbially humane. Upon one occasion an Egyptian taskmaster cruelly beat one of his

Hebrew workmen in sight of a member of Pharaoh's family, who chanced to come out of the palace as if to watch the progress of the work. He seems to be very singularly affected by the sight. As a member of the royal household and the adopted son of a princess, he might be expected to be indifferent to the familiar subject of persecution, or even to side with the persecutor. But no. A sudden fire, as if long pent up within him, flashed at once to his face, and looking about him to be sure of being unobserved, he dealt the Egyptian a mortal blow. The truth was now clear to him, if he had doubted it before. Henceforth ties of blood were stronger than ties of association. The heart that beat under that Egyptian costume was full of Hebrew fire. So far as the Scripture record is concerned, this is the first proof that Moses gave of indignation at the oppressors of his race.

In the ardor of that moment we may justly believe that the leading events of his past life flashed before his mind. There was an emblem of terrible significance in the sight so lately seen. The Hebrew striving with the Egyptian presented two conflicting classes of associations. He thought of his Hebrew birth and Egyptian education. Now he sees before him in the Nile the token of his early exposure. He thinks of the frail basket in which he was exposed to avoid the death decreed by the king against the male children of the Hebrews. He remembers what had been told him of the sister who followed and the mother who from afar watched the little ark, and the cruel wrong done to himself and his nation rises afresh to his mind. How can he avoid thinking also of his

benefactor, the daughter of Pharaoh, who had saved him from death and educated him in all the privileges of the royal court? He thinks, too, of the splendors of the palaces and the mysteries of the temples into which, by the dignity of his adoption, he had been so freely admitted. Which shall win the mastery over him now, — love of his own people, or pride in his adopted nation? The blow struck at that savage taskmaster decided the question, and MOSES was to live and die for the people of his birth and the God of his fathers.

Still, his course was not even now clear. The next day he evinced his new tenderness for his race by trying to separate two Hebrews who were contending together. Alas! frequent lot of the benefactor, as here presented. The taunting reply, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" revealed to him at once his own personal danger at the discovery of his crime, and the ingratitude of the very persons whom he sought to befriend. Flight was now his only safety. He left behind him his regal home, he turned his back upon a country then in the midst of her golden age and already adorned with the glories of Sesostris, alone entered the wilds of Arabia, and there, in the tent of an Arab chief, he found the shelter that he dared not ask of Hebrew or Egyptian. His exile was to complete the preparation which the facts of his infancy and the lessons of his education had begun. Now forty years old, he must see forty more before his great mission begins.

The chosen hour at last came. The vision of the

burning bush, which to him as he mused was radiant with the glory of a present Deity, bade him delay no longer. What thoughts of his life and fortunes, of his race, their God and their destiny, he cherished during these forty years, the record says not. But a mind like his could not be idle. And when he turned aside from his flocks on Mount Horeb, and nature herself shone before him with a celestial light, the voice that spoke then to his soul had doubtless been revered there for many years. The vision of the mount threw its brightness backward upon other days; it shone upon the ark of bulrushes and upon those years of palace life. It was all clear now. He who had been rescued from the waters, and bred in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, had a Divine mission to fulfil. He must be the liberator of his race, to them the chosen lawgiver, and to future ages the champion of the one God against all idolatry.

Backward now he turns to Egypt, bent upon his august work. To free an enslaved nation he carries with him no armed host, no weapons, save his confidence in the promises of God. His subsequent course we have not room minutely to trace nor critically to examine. His meeting with his brother Aaron, — his conference with the Hebrew elders, — the appeal to Pharaoh, first for privilege to worship their fathers' God, and then, when that boon was refused, for liberty to leave the country and become an independent nation, — of these events we cannot treat in detail. It is enough to show that, in three majestic periods of action, he justified his exalted calling and fulfilled his Divine mission.

First came the Exodus,—the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. The story is familiar, yet little understood in its connections with the time. The marvellous character of the evils brought upon the Egyptians, beginning with the corruption of the waters and ending with the death of the first-born, is often dwelt upon, to the exclusion of the effect of the inflictions, not merely upon persons and property, but upon popular superstition, each plague being a defiance of their gods, a desecration of their idols. The departure, the pursuit, the passage of the sea, the overthrow of the enemy, are events each of which is full of important suggestions. But onward we pass; remembering the triumphal song in which Moses and Miriam sang of the great deliverance on the borders of the sea,—not forgetting the conflict that followed with one of the tribes of the desert,—we reach the second stage of the liberator's mission. From the exodus, we pass to the lawgiving.

The Lawgiving! How grand and significant the tribunal from which that law was given! To the Hebrews, so long accustomed to the level pastures of Egypt and the flat sands of the desert, how awful the frowning peaks of Sinai! To Moses how full of tender and august associations! for there, when a simple herdsman, he had enjoyed the beatific vision, and now had led his people hither to receive fuller revelations from Him who had before revealed his glory so awful and his name so sublime, the great Jehovah,—I AM THAT I AM. From the mount Moses bore the law to the people thus made a nation and placed under a constitutional government; first, that moral law or Decalogue which is now regarded by

all civilized people as containing the first principles of piety and morality, securing to God due worship and to persons and property due protection; then the civil and ecclesiastical law, providing by minute enactments for the guidance of the state and the regulation of the church.

A year and a month having elapsed since the exodus, the nation now moved forward from Sinai towards the promised land, the silver trumpets sounding, the tribes marshalled in order under their appropriate banners, the priestly tribe of Levi bearing sacred vessels and the tabernacle, all chanting, according to the record, the Psalm, "Rise up, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered." Before them by day appeared the cloud, by night the pillar of fire. Thus commenced the third stage in the career of Moses, — the years of wandering. We need not enter into the minute history of that time, so full of adventure and trial, of dangers from foes within and without the camp. Never was a benefactor more cruelly slandered and baffled. Soon after the march, his own brother and sister conspired against him, and when the borders of Canaan were reached, fear instead of rejoicing seized the people, and "Back to Egypt," instead of "Forward to the land of our fathers," was the cry. The ingrate people must learn confidence and obedience in a sterner school. "Back to the wilderness," the command of the lawgiver was, and for thirty-eight years the Hebrews were doomed to renew the nomad life of their ancestors, until a new generation, educated under the new institutions and trained by hardship for freedom and law, should be raised up to carry out the august plan.

The end came at last. The borders of the promised land are again reached. The lawgiver repeats his instructions given of old, and adds others suited to the coming exigencies. Sublimely he utters his parting counsel, and gives his blessing to the assembled people. Poetry has no words more thrilling than the passage thus introduced : —

“ Give ear, O ye heavens ! and I will speak ;
And hear, O earth ! the words of my mouth.
My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
My speech shall distil as the dew,
As the small rain upon the tender herb,
And as the showers upon the grass,
Because I will publish the name of the Lord.
Ascribe ye greatness to our God.
He is the Rock, his work is perfect ;
For all his ways are judgment :
Just and perfect are his ways.”

Speaking in a strain beginning thus, and ending in words of blessing, the lawgiver, now so old, yet with eye not dim nor force abated, went up from the plain to a peak of Mount Nebo, and there, with a heart full of joy at the end of his work and of solemnity from the presentiment of approaching death, looked upon the promised land as it lay outstretched in richness and beauty before him,—its rivers, plains, lakes, mountains, all presented to him at once in the glorious view. Sublime death-bed of the great statesman,—emblem of all greatness in its achievement and disappointment ! He saw the land, but was not permitted to go thither. Thirty days the people mourned for him in the plains below. Then onward they went their way, for a great work still remained to be done. Led by Joshua, long trained to the command, they crossed the Jordan, and the land of their fathers was

soon their home. In time Jerusalem arose, to rule the faith of millions by its temple, and to control the world by its cross.

We go not with them, but must linger by the grave of the departed lawgiver, to consider its lessons. We speak now of the man, the mission, the message, — the character, authority, and principles of Moses.

First, the man. We would judge of him by evident facts, preferring to be guided by the Scriptural record of his own deeds, rather than by the romancings of Josephus and the Talmudists. We will not stop to examine the traditions of his surpassing beauty and great precocity, of his being so lovely that, when he was three years old, the people in the street turned to gaze at him as he passed, and of his indicating his future mission even in childhood during his plays, as by taking off the crown of Pharaoh in sport and trampling it under foot, to the horror of the soothsayers present.

His character is expressed by his deeds, and whatever of mythical dress may have been thrown around it, the grand traits cannot be mistaken. That he possessed vast mental power none can reasonably deny, for such power was necessary to enable him to be even the recipient of so exalted a commission, the organ of so remarkable a communication. To bear in his mind that stupendous plan of emancipation, to carry it out in spite of innumerable difficulties, even when deserted by his kindred and friends, to apply the Law to the exigencies of the years of wandering, and to make such provision for the security of the national constitution in the land which he was not to enter, implies the highest kind of wisdom, prudence, and

force. Take whatever view we may of the extent of his supernatural illumination, we must regard him as a constructive mind of the highest order.

In respect to his moral endowments, he has not always been justly appreciated. The stern lawgiver was not all sternness. Even his violent passions, for such undoubtedly he had, did not break forth at his own personal wrongs. He thought for his nation and his trust far more than for himself, and in his treatment of the Egyptian oppressor and the rebels of his own camp there is a disinterested grandeur in his very vehemence. The poems that bear his name are wonderful alike for their tender humility and exalted confidence. He leaned upon a sovereign power as a lowly and faithful servant, and thus performing his work as under Divine guidance, he was brave and bold in his very meekness, strong, not to do his own will, but the Lord's. There is more truth than in these days has been generally allowed in the old primer that called Moses meekest of men. Humility is not the pliant, supple thing that the superficial suppose it to be. Columbus was humble, when refusing to sacrifice to the ridicule of the multitude the belief which he deemed providentially given, that a new world awaited his adventurous fleet. Luther was humble, when, lifting up the Bible before the Imperial Diet, he refused to recant, and stood boldly upon the ground of the New Testament against royal threats and Papal anathemas. Paul was humble, when, at Athens, and before Agrippa, and at Rome, he boldly professed his allegiance to Christ, and confirmed his allegiance at last under the executioner's sword. What, indeed, is humility, but the surrender of man's

will to the Divine will, — a surrender that may give proof of itself, now in lowly penitence and prayer, and now in bold confession and heroic daring?

The intellectual and moral greatness of Moses was more conspicuous from his seeking no official honors, but remaining solely as the religious guide of his nation. He had no powers of eloquence, no rare military skill, no remarkable address. If a speech were to be made, his fluent brother Aaron was called into service. Aaron was made high-priest, Joshua military commander, and during the wandering Hobab acted as guide. Moses was the civil and religious counsellor, and this office shows the nature of his mind, the greatness of his influence. To him belongs the high dignity of devoting his life to a sacred aim, whose results only ages could exhibit. Of those previous to Christ, his name stands first among the leaders, lawgivers, and prophets of our race. How noble he appears in his anticipations of the greater prophet than himself, and of the age better than his own! He claimed not to know all of God's will, nor to have exhausted the Divine light. His face, so generally associated with stern command and imperious law, beamed not seldom with yearning for a brighter day. The lawgiver should stand before us, not in the arrogance of self-complacent righteousness, but with an humble longing for a blessed time beyond his own best achievements, — a time to follow dark centuries of idolatry and degradation with ages of peace and virtue above aught that his own eyes had seen. His character was not unlike the rock which he smote in the desert. Within its adamant strength dwelt a spring of liv-

ing water. Who will deny him the name of the greatest of the ancient men?

From the man we now turn to the mission. Did he follow a supernatural call from Heaven, or did he go forth solely in his own wisdom? We are never displeased to find that the ablest minds among those who incline to reject all claims to supernatural interpositions value so highly the labors of Moses, and laud the influence of his mission. It is a great thing to have his principles judiciously appreciated, whatever may be the view of the source of his wisdom. But for ourselves we confidently maintain that he was favored with a special revelation, and was sent upon his mission with authority from God. Our reasons are many, but chiefly three.

First of all, we believe in his special illumination, from the purity of his doctrine and law. Regarding the being of God and the essentials of moral and civil right, he stood unapproached by any of the sages of his time, nay, by any of the philosophers whom Gentile nations have ever produced. Truth, indeed, always seems simple when once enunciated, and the highest revelations, when once made, may seem self-evident. The Decalogue, so plain and comprehensive, we trace to a wisdom not of this world. The Mosaic system of civil and ecclesiastical polity, whatever view we may take of some of its minor details, bears in its general principles the marks of a divinely illuminated mind.

We do not deny, by any means, that he learned much in the Egyptian schools. We believe, too, in common with all recent students of Egyptian history,

that the mysteries of the priestly caste, in spite of their superstitions and idolatry, bore traces of the existence of an early faith purer than that then prevalent, a recognition of one God, both Creator and Sovereign. The hieroglyphical discoveries compel us also to believe that Egypt furnished Moses with many of the materials for the externals of his ritual, and that, in the Hebrew worship, the symbolism of colors and emblems, the priestly costume and altar service, borrowed not a little from the temples of the Nile. In fact, no writer has shown this more conclusively than one who is preëminently the champion of the literal inspiration of the Scriptures, — the theologian Hengstenberg. But we search hieroglyphic lore and classic history in vain for the moral code which Moses declared and the profound polity which he established. Its own intrinsic excellence prepares us to listen to evidence directly bearing upon the lawgiver's Divine mission.

To the argument from the system itself we add a second, drawn from the power with which he established it, a power evinced alike by his own faith and his influence over a people so refractory and idolatrous as the Hebrews. What short of the conviction of a Divine legation could have sustained him in his trials, and enabled him to work so mightily upon their unwilling minds? He leaned upon unquestionable proofs of a present God, and appealed to these rather than even to the awards of a future state for the credentials of his mission. The singular boldness with which he broke away from the Egyptian notions of futurity, — their sepulchral conceptions of the state of the dead, their glorification of tombs, — with the confidence of his appeal directly to the one God of his

fathers in present manifestation, indicates a faith not borrowed from the priestly mysteries or popular traditions, nor resting upon the deductions of his own reason.

The force of the argument for the Divine legation of Moses, based upon the institutions founded by him and transmitted to subsequent ages, needs only the simplest illustration to be appreciated. That these institutions could have been founded by other persons and ascribed to Moses seems, under the circumstances, next to impossible. What folly it would have been to ask the people to keep national festivals that had no previous hold in their affections! The moment we trace the great Jewish institutions back to him, we admit facts that are inexplicable except upon the supposition of his Divine legation.

But, more than all, we derive proof of the Divine legation of Moses from the evidence of Christianity. Our Saviour recognized the mission of the great law-giver, and exhibited him as a messenger of God both in his essential works and word. The great evidence of the authority of Moses rests ultimately upon the authority of Christ and the connection between the two dispensations, — the Law and the Gospel.

But let the message speak alike for itself, the man, and the mission. Viewed in its central principle, this message was the revelation of the one God, just and holy, a declaration of a law of duty towards God and man, and an application of this law to the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the chosen nation.

The great principle, and the consequent declaration, who will undertake to slight or to gainsay? What

philosophy has ever equalled in depth and sublimity the Mosaic revelation of the Godhead? What morality goes beyond that of the Decalogue, unless it be that taught by Him who reduced each table of commandments to a single principle, and summed up all in the love of God and our neighbor? The difficulty, if such there be, lies in the attempted application of the Divine law to the polity of a chosen nation. What, then, shall we say of the message as exhibited in the civil and Levitical codes?

As Christians we do not by any means feel called upon to defend these codes as being in themselves perfect. They are not our law. Yet we owe them the debt of fair appreciation. The Levitical law needs only to be understood to be respected. Its minute enactments, that seem to us so trivial, were aimed at prevalent dangers, and guarded the national life against idolatrous practices that would utterly corrupt the morals of the people, or against impurities of diet which would impair their health. Its symbols, feasts, and sacrifices were intended to impress upon them, through the senses, the truths and duties which they were too unspiritual to appreciate in a more direct and philosophical statement. Its priesthood were the appointed clergy, who instructed the people in the law, administered in public worship, and by both agencies bound the tribes together in a sacred national compact. All the particulars of the Levitical system we cannot expect to understand, so remote is the time, so peculiar were the circumstances, of the Hebrews and their idolatrous neighbors. We know enough of its leading principles, enough of the practical workings of idolatry, to move us to look with rev-

erence upon the enactments by which the lawgiver hoped to secure his people against what had been the degradation and ruin of so many nations.

The civil law of Moses may well be called a miracle of jurisprudence. To him belongs the high prerogative of founding government, not upon the will of persons, but upon laws. The law of Israel was supreme. High and low were alike subject to its tribunal. The superior pontiff was not too exalted to be bound by the statute-book, nor was the bondman so mean as to be below its protection. Thus the great achievement of the noblest civilization was secured by Moses. To him belongs the honor of the first statement and practice of the doctrine, that the ultimate foundation of law is the will of God, and that legislation based upon Divine justice, not upon the caprice of man, is to rule the nations. Israel was the first republic. Her people were free and equal, their liberties protected by powers admirably adjusted between senate, priests, magistrates, and people. There was more than an empty superstition in the respect which moved our New England fathers to make the Mosaic code the basis of their legislation. They found in their Bibles a system of polity far other than that of kings like James and Charles, and prelates like Whitgift and Laud. The polity of their children has never lost the lessons of their wisdom, and the constitution of our land has borrowed not a little from the Puritan sages. We differ from them in our estimate of the minuter provisions of the code. We of course regard Christianity as establishing far other relations between church and state. But do not our best wisdom and experience agree with them in honoring the essential principle of the Mosaic polity?

But what shall we say of the alleged cruelty of the Mosaic law? Does it not breathe the lust of warfare, and is not Mars, rather than the Heavenly Father, the presiding God of the nation? What to many may seem a strange statement is the contrary fact. The Mosaic code is eminently pacific in its nature. The conquest of the promised land was indeed bloody, and we do not by any means consider Christians as answerable for the manner in which Moses began or Joshua finished it. The Hebrew leaders, however, in their war policy were more humane than the spirit of their age, and appealed, moreover, for authority to a Divine command which ranked the sword with the earthquake and the flood as an agency in preparing the way for a true civilization. But the law itself, the code matured for the government of the nation, was eminently peaceful. It provided for a life of quiet agriculture, and discouraged the passion for military conquest. There was to be no standing army. The land was to be held and cultivated by the tribes as their own and inalienable. A nation of farmers was thus constituted, who would be averse to aggressive warfare, and the country began to decline in true prosperity when this original policy was abandoned and the lust for extending territory by war begun. Thus the Mosaic code anticipated the result of our best experience, and held in honor the arts of agriculture and peace as the true basis of national welfare.

Thus pacific as well as equitable, the civil law was also humane, — humane surely as compared with any other prominent civil code, — more humane than the present policy even of Christian nations. Even the principle of retributive justice, — so much reprobated

by a later age, and so abused by the Jews as to call forth a special condemnation upon its misapplication, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," — was mercy itself when compared with much that is now called Christian legislation. Simply an equivalent for injury was to be demanded. How much more mercy is there in that principle than in the system that sacrifices human existence to chattel property, and demands a man's life for a sheep or horse or forged name! The great error in judging the Mosaic criminal code consists in judging of its merit, not in connection with civil law, but in comparison with the lofty spiritual principles which are the crowning grace of evangelical religion.

Whilst crimes against property were leniently dealt with, offences against religion were very severely punished, on account of their being treason against a Divine Sovereign, as well as sacrilege against the national church. It is not very consistent for us in this time, when a soldier is shot for disrespect to his commander, to blame the code which doomed all idolatrous persons to death, as for an offence the most heinous against the sovereign and the people. It does not do for us to accuse the Mosaic law of inhumanity towards the slave. Although not prohibited, slavery was restricted in the mode best fitted ultimately to suppress it. The slave was under legal protection. The person of the bondman was inviolable. Freedom was the immediate recompense of the slave who had been maimed even by the loss of a tooth. We do not maintain that the Mosaic code was perfect, and beyond need of improvement or progress; else, what room would be left for the dispensation of grace and truth?

That it was humane, we say without hesitation. Let them who have run their eye over the Pentateuch in search for cruel horrors dwell upon passages like these : —

“ Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless, nor take the widow’s raiment to pledge ; but thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence : therefore I command thee to do this thing.

“ When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in thy field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it : it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow ; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward : it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt : therefore I command thee to do this thing.”
— Deut. xxiv. 17 – 22.

The code is full of such tokens of humanity. The Sabbatical year and year of jubilee provided for a periodical abatement of grievances, secured to every man freedom from oppressive creditors, and the inalienable possession of his homestead. In some points Christian powers, whether monarchical or republican, may learn humanity from the system which vulgar infidelity so often stigmatizes as the quintessence of cruelty.

Equal, pacific, and humane, the Mosaic civil law stands a stately monument of an age when the world was in darkness and the lands from which the light

of jurisprudence have since beamed were an unbroken wilderness.

Put all parts of the message together, its fundamental principle, its ecclesiastical polity, and its civil code, may we not say that it proves at once the greatness of the man and the authority of the mission? Nationality, indeed, exclusive nationality, pervades the whole dispensation; but mark well the fact, that this nationality contained within itself the seeds of its own enlargement into a broad humanity. The one nation was to be prepared to become the teacher of all nations. The seed given of God was planted within a walled garden, guarded from harm, and fed with rain and dew from heaven. Complain not of the temporary inclosure. Remember that the fruit there borne is to be for the use of the nations, and in the fulness of time branches from that tree are to take root in every land on earth.

Tenderly, indeed, we ought to regard the fortunes of this oldest of republics, this nation of Israel, that began its career, as did our people, with thirteen tribes or estates, and based legislation, not upon men, but upon laws, and appealed to God as the only king.

We know that the New Testament places the names of Jesus and Moses in intimate connection, and sometimes in contrast. How can we help asking, as we leave the topic before us, What have we now to do with the Hebrew leader, — what has the dispensation of grace and truth to do with the dispensation of law?

Shall we say, let bygones be bygones, or the dead bury their dead, and the past take care of itself? The past is not to the mind bygone, nor are any of

the great lights of our race dead either in our faith or our judgment. Strange as it may seem to us, former ages come nearer to us as in date we recede from them, and humanity gains instead of losing her ancient treasures. The learning of our scholars revives past centuries, and restores to us their sages and institutions. The pickaxe of a French engineer, in turning up a block of black basalt on the left bank of the Nile, brought to light the buried generations of Egypt, by furnishing in its three parallel inscriptions the key to the hieroglyphic language; and we know more of the minutiae of life in Egypt under the Pharaohs, than of life in England under the Saxon kings. The light is breaking upon other buried treasures, and with the rise of a nobler intellectual and moral enthusiasm, and broader humanity, we may expect the combined wisdom of the past to rise from its sepulchres to hold out its torch, not to deepen our funeral lamentations, but to cheer and guide our march of improvement and regeneration.

The Bible, indeed, embalms for us the fame of Moses, and his law comes to us through a succession of living men. But sadly has the genius of his system been misinterpreted, and priestcraft has misapplied to its own aggrandizement a gift which should be a blessing to mankind. His mind was at once reverent, bold, and progressive. Ancient manners and customs he retained when not unworthy, and when these were objectionable he modified, if the time had not come for eradicating, them. The demands of his own age he met with uncompromising energy, and left the door open for future improvement. As a teacher of religion, he now of course

yields to that Messiah whom he foresaw and foretold. As a statesman, he is without an equal, and as such he stands before Christendom in unparalleled grandeur. Solon, Lycurgus, and Numa might well call him master, and Justinian and Tribonian lay their Pandects in humility at his feet. As for those men who have dreamed of distancing all practical experience and ancient wisdom by their Utopian theories of a perfect state, — the Platos, Harringtons, Mores, — they serve but to add honor to the lawgiver whose system, alike in its inherent excellence and its practical efficiency, has but risen in repute during the more than thirty centuries that have seen the rise and wreck of so many proud dynasties. Moreover, the recent experience in forming new civil constitutions on theoretic principles has been such as to reflect new light upon the mission of the great Hebrew. Our own national constitution was not the offspring of a single convention, but the result of centuries of experience under the training of men far from being strangers to the Mosaic wisdom. Representative government, civil equality, popular education, confederate states in national unity, allegiance to a Divine Sovereign, an agricultural population relying upon their own attachment to the soil for self-defence without a standing army, — these principles were not the growth of a day. Our fathers learned to trace them out in the much-loved pages of the Pentateuch, and the developments of Providence enabled them to give a nobler illustration of those principles than the world had yet seen.

Think of the lawgiver upon his sublime death-bed, and what associations crowd upon the mind! He

looked with yearning to a land that he was not to enter, and to a future which in the body he was not to see. How has that future justified his hope, and accepted his idea! Curses like those to be uttered from the barren crags of Ebal upon the disobedient have in all time descended upon nations not reverent towards a supreme law; blessings like those promised upon blooming Gerizim have followed in the path of firm and equal law. Humanity stands like Moses on Pisgah, and our own age entering on a promised land opens a future which itself will not see. That future will be auspicious, if the lessons of sainted fathers are heeded, if coöperation takes the place of strife, and passions are made to bow before the majesty which just law represents, and the eternal God enthrones.

Humanity yearns for statesmen who shall be as efficient and enlightened, and who shall adapt legislation to the needs of men and the call of Providence. The statesman's office has the sanction of God, alike by the gift of requisite powers and the testimony of ancient dispensations. The wretched demagogues, who think only of passing expediency, and who know nothing of the distant aim and self-denial which are willing to offend the multitude for a time to bless them in the end, deserve not the august name of statesmen. We yearn for true sages in the science of society, alike wise and efficient in planning the laws of the statute-book, and devising modes for combining into due order the too chaotic social elements, and preparing to realize the Christian idea of a kingdom of God on earth.

If the vision be not realized in our day, it is good,

nevertheless, for young and old to cherish it earnestly. Hope and pray for the future, as in the light that startled the Apostles on the mount of transfiguration. To them Christ appeared transformed in glory, and on either side of him stood Moses and Elias, the representatives of the law and the prophets. What means that scene? A fanciful myth, a phantasmal dream, a passing expedient? Not so. A glorious symbol of things to come. Incarnate love stands central, supported on one side by the majesty of sacred law, and on the other side by the grandeur of prophecy. We accept the vision and deem the omen not deceptive. All that has been best in subsequent times has been an illustration of its truth. Nations and men have been blessed as they have seen God in Christ, and glorified him in a social order based upon his justice, and in a prophetic wisdom and eloquence inspired by his breath. To us, children of the Pilgrims, how much that vision means! Glory to the God of our fathers, whose love is incarnate in Christ! Honor to the justice enshrined in our laws! Sacred be the prophetic fire that has burned in the souls of our best teachers, and made our noblest literature true to God as to man! Brighter, brighter beam the vision, — nearer, nearer come the Redeemer with Moses and Elias, with lawgiver and prophet!

III.

AARON AND THE PRIESTHOOD.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews is a continued comparison between Judaism and Christianity, and is designed to show the superiority of the Gospel over the Law, or of Christ over Moses the Lawgiver and Aaron the Priest. Of Moses the Lawgiver we have spoken, and of his relation to Christ. Aaron the Priest is now our topic. Him we are to consider in himself, in his office, and in his relation to that greater High-Priest who has passed into the heavens.

Aaron himself comes first before us. Of the man not much need be said. His history is very scantily given, and the splendor of his office has thrown into the shade the details of his personal life.

His birth and home were in Egypt, as was the case with his younger brother, Moses. But history is silent concerning him during the first eighty-three years of his career. That he dwelt among his Hebrew brethren; that he lived among a people as distinguished for their idolatry as for their magnificence; that his three years' seniority over Moses saved him alike from his younger brother's exposure on the Nile and from the luxuries of the imperial court; and that from some peculiar gifts or circumstances he had acquired

influence over his countrymen, and was conspicuous for his eloquent address, — these are particulars of his early history that may be certainly inferred, if not expressly stated.

The younger brother, so much superior in strength of will, cast of mind, and providential calling, was the occasion of placing Aaron's name upon the historical page. During his exile of forty years in Arabia, Moses, as we have seen, meditated his majestic mission, and at last yielded to the Divine voice that bade him lead the chosen race to the promised land and the appointed worship. Still he lingered, conscious of his defects, and pleading his incompetency. "O my Lord! I am not eloquent; neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." The reply was, "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold! he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart."

At Horeb the brothers met. The younger to impart, the elder to receive, the Divine message. They turned towards Egypt and their oppressed nation. As they passed by temples and palaces, courtiers and priests undoubtedly paid little heed to the two humble wayfarers. But those temples and palaces had no such tenants as they, — they, soon to be Lawgiver and Priest with an empire that time thus far has but widened.

Now, side by side with that of Moses, Aaron's public career begins. Its first stage is in the work of the Exodus. Aaron is the spokesman, commissioned to deal now with the tyrant Pharaoh and now with the

obstinate and refractory Hebrews. He seems to have stood faithfully by his stronger brother through all the horrors and wonders of the march from Egypt. Yet his part is evidently secondary, and he is not conspicuous in the perils of the passage and combats. His voice is not mentioned as leading in the triumphal hymn raised by Moses and Miriam after the passage of the Red Sea. After the Hebrews left their pleasant encampment by the twelve wells of Elim and the threescore palm-trees, and began to murmur at the hardships of the wilderness, Aaron was directed by his brother to soothe them, alike by rebuking their disobedience and by promises of Divine protection. His name stands as the orator of the Exodus.

From the Exodus pass we to the Mount. Sinai, that was the scene of the Lawgiver's august communion with God, looked down upon the people's superstition and Aaron's shame. The eloquent orator of the Exodus bows before a wretched idol. When the Lawgiver, bringing with him the two tablets upon which were written the fundamental principles of religious and civil order, returned to the people, he heard the noise of singing and dancing. In the centre stood the noted figure of one of the idols by whose worship the Hebrews had been fascinated in Egypt. They were offering sacrifice to a golden calf, and that very Aaron, whom in his mountain meditations he had fixed upon for the leading minister of the purer worship, was presiding at the accursed altar. To dash down the tablets and destroy the idol was the work of a moment with the Lawgiver. He then turns to his brother, and the conversation between them exhibits the wrong and

the reason of the idolatrous proceeding, by showing at once the degraded mind of the people and the imperative need of a form of worship addressed to the senses as well as the soul. The Hebrews were a nation of pitiable children who had been constantly surrounded by visible representations of Divine power, and pined for some visible object of worship, crying to Aaron, "Up! make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." The golden calf, which Aaron probably interpreted in a far deeper sense than the dull multitude, was the result. The transaction before the idol was in him probably a temporary expedient. The result cured him of any like timeserving, whilst it prepared him to do his conspicuous work as the chief pontiff of a system of religion which adored the one God, and used visible forms, not to enshrine idols, but to aid the worshipper in his conceptions of the invisible Jehovah.

After the idol, with its humiliating yet salutary lesson, comes the consecration. The scene, as described in the Book of Leviticus, has great beauty and sublimity. In the background stands Sinai, its thunders hushed, its lightnings vanished, its rocky peaks pointing upwards to the heavens and the Great Invisible. Around were fertile slopes, laden with rich vegetation and watered by mountain brooks. Before them stood the opening of the desert, the path to that far-off land with which the destiny of the people was identified. The Lawgiver, now returned from his second long sojourn in the mount, more than ever conscious of his high mission, and convinced of the

need of a definite religious ritual for the government of the nation, consecrated his elder brother and sons to the priestly office. The ceremony took place before a magnificent tent, which had been constructed according to a pattern given by Moses, and from materials embodying the richest possessions of the people. This tent or tabernacle, which aimed to represent the palace of the national king, Jehovah, must have its prime-minister and attendant servants. In presence of the great congregation Aaron was consecrated High-Priest, whilst his sons were appointed to the ordinary priesthood. With rites of purification, anointing, and sacrifice, Moses arrayed his elder brother in magnificent pontifical robes, and the theocracy was now established, that wonderful system which has survived the nation in which it rose, and governed Christendom after the Hebrews were scattered to the winds, their tabernacle and temple gone back to dust.

Thus consecrated to his office, Aaron, now bound down by a fixed order of service, may be regarded as comparatively free from vicissitude. For forty years he maintains his sacred charge. Singular and interesting contrast between that career of wandering and that unchanging ritual! Everywhere, throughout all changes, in the desert or by the oasis, in the peaceful encampment or in fear of hostile tribes, the sacred tent is borne, and at the appointed seasons it is pitched for worship. Emblem of that life of faith which bears within itself an unchanging trust in all changes of time and fortune. Of the inward experience of the High-Priest we know little. That he was at times tempted to murmur at the sway exercised by his younger brother, we are informed, and that he

more and more found his affections and faith engrossed by the ritual which he administered, we have cause to believe.

Only less sublime than the death of his brother, the Lawgiver, was that of Aaron. He felt the presentiment of his approaching dissolution, as the march drew near the promised land. He ascended Mount Hor, was there divested of his priestly garments by his brother, and Eleazer his son was arrayed in them in his stead. He died;—the people mourned for him thirty days, and to this present time his tomb is looked upon with reverence by Jew, Christian, and Mahometan.

So passed away the first High-Priest of Israel. What the man was, this brief sketch of the orator, the idol, the consecration, shows. Eloquent, susceptible, kindly, better fitted to aid than to originate a great movement, faithful, persevering, yet more disposed to lean upon a gorgeous ritual than to trust in a spiritual religion, Aaron stands before us as a favorable specimen of the priestly class. The office was more than the man. Of the office we now speak.

First, of its fundamental idea. The office was based upon the idea that Jehovah was ruler of the nation, and that he was to be approached through a hierarchy and temple that enthroned his glory and expressed his will. The High-Priest was set forth as the prime-minister or grand vizier of the Divine court, the sons of Aaron were the assistant priests, and the whole tribe of Levi to which he belonged were to perform the subordinate offices of the worship. The costume of the High-Priest fitly represented the dignity of his office, consisting as it did of an under-

dress of fine linen ; over this was a robe of blue, richly bordered around the neck, the lower edge at the feet hung with pomegranates and alternate bells of gold which sounded as he moved ; over this, again, the ephod, made of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, twisted with threads of gold ; a rich girdle was fastened over the breast ; from the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, adorned with gems and gold, hung by two gold chains the breastplate, a piece of cloth of gold a span square, in which twelve precious stones were set in four rows, each engraved with the name of one of the tribes. The head-dress was a rich turban or mitre of fine linen, on the front of which appeared a golden plate, inscribed, " Holiness to the Lord." Thus arrayed, the vicegerent of God administered the imposing rites of the tabernacle, except on the great Fast-day of Atonement, when he wore only white linen, thus presenting himself before the mercy-seat bereft of all his splendor.

Thus indicating to the people the majesty of the Divine Ruler, the High-Priest was called to perform corresponding duties. He was to be the interpreter of the Divine will to the tribes, and to bear their offerings of gratitude and penitence to Jehovah. He was thus at once supreme judge and chief pontiff. To him came the ultimate appeal in all questions concerning the fundamental theocratic law ; to him belonged the oversight of priesthood, tabernacle, and ritual. In him thus rested the conservative power of the civil order and the stability of the religious system.

As the chief agent of mediation between Jehovah and the people, he officiated in the most solemn of sacrificial rites ; and he alone, and this but once each year,

was entitled to enter the inner shrine of the tabernacle and offer the great sacrifice of expiation. To understand the significance of his sacrificial office, it is not necessary to adopt the prevalent theories of typical rites or vicarious substitution. It is enough to know that emotions of gratitude and penitence are more earnest and expressive when connected with specific acts, and that the offering of valued fruits and cattle upon the altar of worship became a very expressive test and incentive of gratitude, and that the slaying of victims was a striking symbolical expression of conviction of guilt and its due penalty, and one that tended strongly to impress upon the people the need of repentance. Upon the sacrificial system under the theocracy, whole libraries have been written, and more are likely to be written. We are not of that class of rationalists who reject as false whatever claims to be mysterious in religion, and we are quite ready to accept the sacrificial system under both dispensations, as having connection with an unseen power and a divine economy whose meaning we cannot hope to exhaust. But when controversialists would force upon us their own theories, we object most decidedly to their dictation, and do not feel ourselves as at all irreverent towards God's mysteries because we do not obey the men who seem to us to darken counsel by words without knowledge. We cannot for a moment believe that any sacrifice, whether of thanksgiving or expiation, can be acceptable to God, apart from the feeling in which it is offered. That God can be propitiated merely by the blood of lambs or goats is an idea at variance with the first principles of religion, and one as strongly rebuked by

the Old Testament prophets as discountenanced by the spirit of the Gospel. To us the sacrificial office of the priest is intelligible only as being a visible exhibition of moral and spiritual truths. It is religion presented to the senses and through them to the heart. Thus viewed, the priest, temple, and sacrifice are interesting and imposing, and the ancient dispensation is full of intimations of the better revelation that was to be. But viewed otherwise, viewed either as a gorgeous pageant or a magical incantation, the priestly ritual sinks at once from its dignity, and the vicegerent of God becomes a magnificent impostor, a sublime mountebank. The Mosaic law is fitly the interpreter of its own ritual, and be it remembered, that behind all the splendid rites of the hierarchy stood an uncompromising law that claimed the whole heart of the worshipper for the God of his worship. Many of the emblems of the altar service were obviously borrowed from the Egyptian temples, and the pictures still extant in Egypt illustrate singularly the Bible account of the costume of the Hebrew priests. But the plain revelation of the One God and the immutable moral law stood upon every feature of the Mosaic system, and distinguished it from Egyptian superstition.

Representative of the Most High, interpreter of the Law, and chief minister in the sacrificial worship, the High-Priest must of course sustain important relations to the state. He was not the executive magistrate, neither governor nor king, but must have been an important aid and check to the executive power. He was not officially of the prophetic class, yet could not have been without important influence upon that class, now checking their excessive enthusiasm by appealing

to the ultimate law, and now encouraging or chilling them in their impassioned rebukes of prevalent wickedness, or enraptured intimations of the coming of a better age and more perfect revelation. Much of the history of the Jewish nation turns upon the relation of the priest to king and prophet. The true order of the state depended upon the just balance between the clergy, the civil magistracy, and the popular moralists. Nobly the priest often vindicated his mission as the guardian of Divine truth and the minister of an exalted worship, checking regal ambition and fanning the prophetic fire. But too often he became a formalist of the letter and the ritual, the rival or the slave of kingly ambition, and the fanatical persecutor of prophetic freedom. After the captivity and restoration, nobly the High-Priest assumed the guardianship of the nation, and centuries afterwards, when the valiant Maccabees threw from Judah the foreign yoke, more than once the mitre was worn by a pontiff as eminent for signal energies as for devoted zeal. But as the nation drew near its final decline, the priesthood lost its dignity in losing its independence. Under Herod, great in sin as in title, the High-Priest was degraded into a tool of the monarch. How sad and pathetic is the scene in which Herod, to disarm popular fury, allowed the rightful heir of the office, the young prince Aristobulus, then but seventeen years of age, to be consecrated to the office, and when the graceful boy, clad in the stately pontifical robes, won the hearts of all beholders by his dignity in the discharge of his official duties, the monster had him seized and put to an atrocious death. Thus had the priesthood fallen below the throne. When Caiaphas and Jesus met,

the scene showed far better than any rhetorical antithesis how hostile the priest had become towards the prophet, and the successor of Aaron thirsted for the blood of Him whose mission was the great reality of which Aaron's office was but the shadow. Still, not a little heroism was to adorn the line of Aaron before the theocracy fell; and when, during the sack of the neighboring cities of the land by the Romans preliminary to the assault upon Jerusalem, the High-Priest Ananus was slain for his noble defence of the holy city against a base faction and its foreign allies, and his body was cast forth to the dogs, the only man was removed who could have restored peace to his country, and from that night Josephus dates the ruin of Jerusalem. Three years longer the city stood upon its foundations. Before the engines of Titus overthrew its walls, its glory had departed, its law been trampled upon, and the last of its high-priesthood had been murdered, and the best citizens saw more mercy in the yoke of the Roman soldier than in the fanaticism of the Jewish zealot. Soon the temple was the scene of a burnt-offering and bloody sacrifice unknown in the priestly ritual. The courts were crowded with thousands who sought shelter at a shrine deemed imperishable; "they lay heaped, like sacrifices, round the altar," and the steps of the temple ran streams of blood. What the sword left undone, fire accomplished. The Jewish theocracy was at an end.

But was its spirit gone, its essential idea abandoned? Follow the march of the victorious army to the proud capital, the Eternal City. Nothing could exceed the magnificence of the triumph which Ves-

pasian celebrated with his son Titus for their common victories. The whole world seemed to have been put under contribution to swell the splendors and wonders of the procession. But among the spoils there was one department that must have drawn with a strange fascination the gaze of a significant but despised portion of the Roman population. With mingled feelings some Christian men must have looked upon the golden table, the seven-branched candlestick, and the book of the Law, that had been taken from the temple of Jerusalem. Yes, it was true, the haughty conquerors bore with them in the hour of their pride the proof of their own weakness and of the Divinity of Him whose followers they had cruelly persecuted. He had predicted the fall of city and temple. That triumphal march then proclaimed the glory of the Prince of Peace. A power was at work in Rome little understood by the imperial line. Some faint tradition existed, that two men from the East, named Peter and Paul, had been executed at Rome four or five years previous, and mention may sometimes have been made in courtly circles of a company of Nazarenes who were under the charge of an old man, Linus, and strange stories may have been told of their midnight worship in the catacombs beneath the city. But even the boasted philosophy of Titus would have been startled, had he been told that the hierarchy of Jerusalem was to be renewed with thousand-fold grandeur in Rome, and that the successors of that Linus were to be the high-priests of a vast theocracy such as before had scarcely haunted the fancies of men. But such became the sober fact. In Pope and Bishop the office of the High-Priest has

been renewed. Culminating in Hildebrand, the Roman Pontificate has come down to our own time, in its essential elements unchanged by the wreck of ages. The image of the golden candlestick carved upon the Arch of Titus has been crumbling into dust, but its seven branches have found a magnificent substitute in the Eternal City itself, whose seven hills have for so many centuries been lighted up by shining monuments of Catholic faith and zeal. In less conspicuous and consistent quarters, the imposing spectacle has been imitated, and the system of Prelacy in the Greek and Anglican Church exhibits the attempt to rival the Roman Pontiff in his claims to legitimacy in the order of Aaron.

Aaron indeed survives. He that died on Mount Hor, before the entrance to the promised land, lives in far more stately embodiment in the high places of Christendom. The Hebrew priest still lords it over the worship of Christendom. The universal doctrine in the Christian hierarchy is that bishop, priest, and deacon are the rightful successors of high-priest, priest, and Levite. The office of Aaron remains.

The question is, Ought it to remain, or are the clergy of Christendom to be regarded as inheriting the official authority of the Aaronic priesthood? Our reply is decided, No, if the Bible be a sufficient guide. According to the New Testament the Christian ministry differs essentially from the Jewish priesthood. The Christianity of the New Testament is without priest, without sacrifice, without temple, in any sense in which these were recognized among the Jews. The ministers of the Gospel were never called priests in the ancient sense. They were simply

called messengers, or elders, or overseers, or evangelists. No altar was set forth for the blood of victims. That great act of sacrificial love ended the old sacrificial system in bringing to light its central idea, and henceforth the acceptable offering was presenting the body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God!

Compare the Mosaic idea of local worship with the doctrine of our Lord upon the worship of the Father. "In the place which the Lord shall choose," says Moses, "to set his Name therein, there shalt thou offer thy sacrifices." "The hour cometh," says Jesus, "when men shall neither on this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." "Whosoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "In his Temple," says the Psalmist, "doth every one speak of his glory; there will I dwell, for I have a delight therein." "Ye are the temple," says the Apostle, "of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you."

But because we regard Christianity as having no official priesthood, ritual sacrifice, and exclusive temple, do we therefore rob it of all power over the affections, by dissipating its substance into an ethereal spiritualism, or freezing its life into an ethical abstraction? Far from it. The Christianity of the New Testament ministers to the affections in its very largeness, elevation, and simplicity. Our High-Priest has passed into the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not men. Interpreter of the Divine law by his doctrine, and exemplar of the love of God and man, clothed with moral graces of ineffable beauty, our Saviour by his voluntary offering of himself upon the

cross consummated the system of sacrifices by manifesting its essential spirit, and passed within the veil into the inner shrine of God, drawing all earnest hearts to him in the faith and love that reconcile man with God, and appropriate the great atonement. Now the Christian looks to Jesus as the author and finisher of the faith, and from God, through him, derives religious truth and spiritual life. He is the priest of the new and better theocracy, even of the kingdom of God of old set up on the earth, and claiming all nations and men for its subjects.

But has the kingdom no visible hierarchy, no ritual, no sanctuaries? Is there to be no appointed order of visible worship? Our reply is, that all service of God upon Christian principles is worship under the Divine kingdom, and men are left free to make such arrangements as may tend most effectually to impress upon them their duties to God and man, and their relations to the spiritual world. Hence, the Christian congregation of worshippers, — the prayer, — the Gospel lesson, — the hymn, — the sermon, — the memorial signs of Christ, baptism and the Lord's Supper, — expressive exhibitions of Christ, as the way of purity and union. Hence, too, the exaltation of the uses of daily life, and the hope of the rise of a social order more worthy than any that has ever appeared of Him to whom, as the mediator between God and man, the founder of a Divine kingdom upon the earth, we look for light and consolation. Hence the growing longing for a Christian civilization, the weariness of letter creeds and cold formalism, — a civilization that shall be the embodiment of Christianity, and present man in true relations with nature, his neighbor, and his God.

Not in vain was that theocratic ritual devised, not in vain did Moses rule and Aaron minister. Their system embodied a truth that cannot die, and their ritual implies principles of civil and religious order that are permanent as the word of God. Man is a social being, and the spiritual religion of the New Testament was never intended to make him a solitary ascetic or an enraptured egotist. The hierarchies that have striven to build up the kingdom of God upon the Jewish basis, have accepted a great truth with a great error. They have acknowledged that there is a Divine order to be followed by human society on earth, and that the service of God is the foundation of social union. But in their attempt to set up a ritual sacrifice, and by consecrated bread to repeat the sacrifice of Christ, and feed men thus with the food of angels, they have made a mistake, whose extent will be understood only when the true doctrine of life, individual and social, is carried out, and men shall learn to connect with their daily bread a life that breathes of God and blesses man.

Till a truer civilization comes, the priestly hierarchy will remain. Till then let it remain. For if earth presents to us nothing better than idols of gold and military glory, we prefer to kneel at the shrine of Aaron, and win the blessing of the pontiff who wears his robes and aims to repeat his sacrifice. We wish not the old hierarchy to disappear, until a better order prevails or is recognized. The worship of physical comfort and social luxury that characterizes our time, the deification of Nature, not under the forms of the heavenly host, or of sacred birds and beasts, but of mechanical and chemical forces that promise men

wealth, is a base idolatry, far too base to meet the yearnings of hearts raised above the clod. Who that thinks and aspires is not heart-sick of our present civilization, and its idols of gold and slavery and war? Who does not feel glad that our financial age, in its mighty effort to subject all things to its sway, has found itself so baffled by the old hierarchy, and that the line of Aaron, for lack of a nobler order, still keeps its power unbroken by the host of materialists who in literature, philosophy, trade, and legislation have threatened to be the 'Titanic fathers of a new and rebellious world?

Strangely the tiara of Aaron shines now from its new possessor. Pius the Ninth was of late the central man of Christendom, and may be again. Of him and his policy we never formed any enthusiastic hopes. In that office the man must always be mastered by the system, and his strength or his weakness be guided by a power inexorable until overthrown. For more than a thousand years, that wonderful system has pursued its prescribed course, bearing in its path all varieties of talent, disposition, and fortune. The mighty Gregory the Seventh, who brought emperors in humility to his feet, and the feeble Urban the Sixth, whose life was a petty quarrel for ascendancy; the accomplished Leo the Tenth, pattern of scholar and gentleman, and the monster Alexander the Sixth, union of beastly lust and demoniac hatred; Julius the Second, who led his army in person, and Paul the Fourth, whose life was penitence and prayer; Gregory the Thirteenth, who reformed the astronomical calendar, and Urban the Eighth, who obliged Galileo to abjure his doctrine of the solar system; the last Gregory,

whose policy was hostile to all science and reform, and the present Pius, who was hailed as the hope of freedom and humanity ; — all have been subservient to the same iron system, and they are fond dreamers who look for any departure from the established Papal doctrine. The Pope remains, and will remain, until a mightier power than he rises to supplant him. Let him remain, at once a landmark of the former days and a measure of the power which a truer ministration of Christianity must equal and surpass, in order to be faithful to its high mission. The Roman Pontiff will fall as soon as true Christianity is presented in a mode as efficient as his hierarchy.

Let real Christianity have free course, and go forth to its work with its weapons of heavenly temper, overthrowing prevailing evils, and building up individual and social life after the standard of the true living temple. Let that divine humanity, which gave Jesus his consecration on earth, and exalted him to his place in heaven, bring on the reign of the Heavenly Father, and establish the brotherhood of men. Let a pure and living and genial Christianity be preached to our congregations, and applied to our daily lives. Let "Holiness to the Lord" be engraven upon its brow, and as it goes forth upon its march of truth and peace and love, let it bear upon its breastplate, not the names of exclusive tribes, but of all nations of men ; and as it moves upon its consecrated path, holier light shall shine than ever blazed from the golden candlestick, and more thrilling harmonies will be heard than ever came from the golden bells that encircled Aaron's stately robes, and sounded as he walked his round of mystic sacrifices.

IV.

SAUL AND THE THRONE.

AMONG the Hebrew fathers, we have thus far considered the Lawgiver and the High-Priest. Our task at present is with the King, — with him first in the regal line, and by no means last in regal energies. We cannot better introduce him than by recurring at once to the scene in which he was greeted with that loyal shout which has welcomed monarchs to the throne for ages, from the days of Saul to those of Victoria: “For all the people shouted, and said, ‘God save the king!’”

The place is Mizpeh, forming with Bethel and Gilgal the judicial circuit of the Hebrew Judges. Here, years before, the sage and prophet Samuel had been inaugurated as the Judge of Israel, and other events of high importance had taken place. Three parties now present themselves, each of whom must have a passing notice, that we may understand the unexampled spectacle, — the people who hailed their king, the person thus recognized, and the prophet who presided over the meeting.

The people, — the multitude who compose that excited assembly, — who are they? Descendants of the slave tribes whom the great lawgiver led out of

Egypt. Five centuries have nearly passed. The laws of Moses have been put to the severe test of experience, and experience has at once illustrated his wisdom and the folly and weakness of the people. During the long interval, the nobler men of the nation have striven to carry out the idea of the theocracy, and establish an efficient government of laws, instead of a capricious despotism of persons. The conquest being principally achieved by Joshua, the general appointed by Moses, the sway of the Judges succeeded, a class of rulers whose frequent heroism is far more apparent than the exact nature and limit of their office. They seem to have been, in a measure, the presidents of the Hebrew republic, during a period of much strife and trouble, and to have been more conspicuous for smiting the enemy than for controlling the tribes. The noblest of the judges was the last, and he it is who presides over the assembly at Mizpeh. He would have counselled a far different course, but the people would have their way, and he chose rather to regulate it by his judgment than to try to suppress it by his waning authority. They were weary of being harassed by their enemies, and cried out for a more efficient government. They had besieged their judge in his own home with their importunity, and persisted in their request in spite of his expostulations. "Nay," they say, "but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

A venerable man presides over the assembly, and the deference with which the people still treat their acknowledged judge proves that the sense of social

and civil order had not yet deserted the tribes. This man has been so noted for the piety of his youth, that the wisdom and fidelity of his mature years have been too little appreciated. It is Samuel. Many years — years of great vicissitude and trial — had intervened between this day at Mizpeh and the night at Shiloh when, a child, he had heard the mysterious voice that assured him of his divine calling. The man was faithful to the convictions of the child, and when his guardian, the high-priest Eli, died heart-broken at the perversity of his sons and the desecration of the sacred ark, upon Samuel, that marked child of Providence, the destinies of the nation rested. Noble had been his administration; for as a guide of youth he was the Fénelon, and as the head of the government, the Washington, of the Hebrews. To him trouble, sad and depressing, had now come. The misconduct of his sons combined with the burden of years to weigh down his hopes, not to break his integrity. The complaint of the elders of Israel to him told but too faithfully the story of his troubles, and the condition of the tribes. “Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” To this had it come at last, after a long, judicious, and faithful administration. Devotedly attached to the Mosaic republic, and striving in all things to carry out its principles, he saw that the day had come for the change predicted, yet deprecated, by the lawgiver, and the republic must become a monarchy. A truly great man will try to guide the storm which he cannot avert. Samuel in his wise conservatism was no obstinate bigot. Above his age, he was yet the man for his time. Boldly stating to the

people the consequences of the innovation, he endeavored to direct their choice to the most suitable person. Apparent accident brought the man to his notice. Seeking the stray herds of his father, a tall youth of the tribe of Benjamin came to Ramah. Despairing of success by further search, he had resolved as a last resort to consult the wise man, so noted as a seer. The man whom he first met was Samuel himself. Youth and age have rarely been brought together under circumstances so momentous. Youth came to inquire. Age answered the question by another, and one addressed to the heart rather than the ear. At the first questioning glance, the sage saw that the needed man had come, that the real king was then in the dormant soul of that tall, earnest young herdsman. He invited the youth to his house, gave him the chief place among his guests, went with him to public worship, and after assuring himself of his guest's true capacity by protracted conversation upon the house-top, he told him distinctly of his high destiny, and anointed his head with oil, in token of his future coronation. Why did Samuel act so precipitately? He was divinely guided, the record states. But the record, moreover, leaves us in little doubt as to the qualities of the youth which were the ground of the choice. Here was a man fitted to be the hero king of the Jewish theocracy. His strength and courage were obvious from his gigantic stature and manly bearing. But more than this was needed, and chief of all, the element of religious enthusiasm; for by this Joshua and Caleb, Samson and Barak, had been mighty, and by this the hero is always mightier than by brute force. That this element lay hid within

the young herdsman's soul, the sage obviously saw, and offered to tell him all that was in his heart.

Called together by their judge, the tribes assembled at Mizpeh. Again the youth and the sage meet. A king was to be chosen by sacred lot, under the prophet's direction, as the interpreter of the Divine will. First upon the tribe of Benjamin, then upon the family of Matri, and then upon Saul, the son of Kish, the lot fell. The name was little known, if at all, to the multitude. Who and where is this man? He is found among the tents and baggage, trying, either in fear or modesty, to hide himself from sight, and is brought before the people for the first time. "And when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, 'God save the king!'"

A great change in a short time had come over the youth thus selected. Profoundly had Samuel judged his heart, and bade him seek in the schools of the prophets and the thrilling strains of devout music the impulse by which he was to be changed into another man. He thus imbibes the spirit of the theocracy. The souls of Abraham and Joseph and Moses and Joshua rise with power before him, and his masculine nature is thrilled to the core with burning enthusiasm for his nation and his God, and with restless yearning to put down the foreign and domestic foes who threaten the national law and worship. At Mizpeh he was king indeed, and when the assembly was dismissed by Samuel, he had wrought so mightily upon

the hearts of the people, that a large band of men immediately attached themselves to him as a royal guard. But in this world no triumph is complete. A little cloud appeared in the brilliant sky of this day of jubilee. "The children of Belial said, 'How shall this man save us?' And they despised him, and brought him no presents: but he held his peace."

The assembly at Mizpeh is dissolved. People, prophet, and prince part for a season, but their destinies are by no means separate. Saul is king. It is one thing to have the name, and another thing to be worthy. Is Saul king indeed, or so only in name? Let his government be the answer, alike in its glory and shame, in its rise and progress, in its decline and fall.

The time soon came to test the power of Saul, and open to him the greatness predicted. Step by step his bright star climbed towards its zenith, not always there to shine. The Ammonite king threatened the northern border. The tribe of Manasseh, occupying on the northeast a position in the kingdom somewhat like that held by the State of Maine with us, was outrageously invaded, and peace was offered only upon condition that all the men in the beleaguered city should lose the right eye. The citizens asked seven days' armistice, and sent word of their plight to Saul. It was just the state of things needed to bring out what was in him. The people had long been ruled by a wise man, and now they found they had a strong man. The martial spirit, with the theocratic enthusiasm, mounted at once to his heart. With terrible significance, he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them through all Israel as a decla-

ration of war and call to arms. To the messengers of the oppressed city he said, "Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, To-morrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help." It was bravely done, as well as said. At the morning watch, Saul, with his three chosen companies, broke into the Ammonite camp, and not two of the mighty host were left together. If fighting is ever well, this was well done. The warrior king has won his title, and he who was hailed sovereign at Mizpeh is now crowned at Gilgal. None doubted of Saul's call to the throne. The people cried for the blood of them who before had dissented, but Saul said, "There shall not a man be put to death this day; for to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel." At Gilgal the coronation takes place. Prophet and king meet there once more. Samuel, in a scene not surpassed in the history of governments, presides at this renewal of the kingdom; he reviews his own administration, states the true constitutional limit to the royal power, and calls upon Heaven to attest the truth of his declarations.

Saul goes on in his career of victory, striving at once to unite the force of the nation in suppression of anarchy, and to combine their powers to resist invasion. The enemy on the southwestern border next feels his vengeance, and after the Philistine the turn of the Amalekite comes. The details of these wars we will not rehearse, for they accord little with a Christian taste, however much they may resemble the annals of our modern warfare. That Saul served a providential purpose in defending the national domain, we cannot but allow, for manifestly the sword was a necessary agency in the ruder periods of the human

race. But the better minds of the nation deeply deplored the necessity that demanded the warrior king, and displaced the wise judge for the military champion. How fully their surmises were justified, the result soon proved. However limited by statute law and imposing precedent, the throne soon began to trench upon national rights by encroaching upon constitutional limits. In connection with abject bigotry and moody superstition, a despotic temper soon began to reveal itself in the monarch, and in each of his great victories there was some development indicative of the causes of his decline and fall. At one time desperately bent upon sacrificing his noblest son to a hasty vow, at another time he profanely assumes the priestly office, and conducts sacrifices, which, when thus offered, tended to break down the safeguards of law by placing the throne above the altar and confounding the state with the church. He showed obvious signs of a disposition to make his own will law, and what might seem to us an act of mercy, as the sparing the life of the Amalekite king, was regarded by his chief adviser as an act of rapacity and self-will, so odious was the Amalekite idolater, and so accursed were all his goods in the eyes of the stricter men of the theocracy. The cloud that seemed so small at Mizpeh soon now began to lower over and darken the horizon. At Gilgal Samuel told the king of his errors, and their certain doom.

Now the time of declension comes. The evil spirit comes to him, and takes the place of the Lord of hosts. It is not strange that he should be so moody and desponding. He was constitutionally a very impulsive man, and depression was very like to follow.

the exultation of his brilliant triumph. He was made for action rather than for reflection, and had but a small stock of intellectual resources to fall back upon after the stimulus of battle and victory was withdrawn. He brooded sadly, too, over his error, and the denunciation of the prophet haunted him like a spectre. The evil spirit was indeed upon him.

Its power was strengthened by the very means taken to cast it out. Strong men, who care not for threats, and who do not tremble at thunder, are sometimes strangely moved by music. Thus the great heart of Alfred was cheered, and Luther could be roused from frightful trances by the strains of the lute. A shepherd boy of Bethlehem was noted for his skill with the harp, and was sent for to soothe the moody king. What strains he played we are not told. But what else could he play but those national melodies that spoke at once of God's greatness and the nation's providential history and elected champions? Saul was refreshed, and was well. But alas! the hand that so repelled the fiend was doomed unconsciously to recall him with tenfold fury.

The king had favor and smiles for that shepherd boy when he came to him with fair countenance and thrilling music. Far different the feeling when that same youth, become his armor-bearer and companion, returning with the king from battle, was hailed by the Hebrew women, who came forth with singing and dancing and tabrets and joy and instruments, and said in alternate song,

“Saul hath slain his thousands,
And David his tens of thousands.”

The demon of jealousy was roused. On the mor-

row David played as before, but the music only added to the evil spirit's power, by illustrating the skill of the youth so mighty in the arts of peace and war. The javelin hurled at the minstrel's heart fell harmless, or harming rather only him who cast it.

Saul's glory declines. Whose honor is not declining, when the spirit of hatred becomes a dominant motive in life? I will not follow the development of the king's wrath, and of David's efforts to escape the doom decreed against him. Saul's evil genius had its consummation in one atrocious act,—the slaughter of the priesthood for a single deed of mercy towards the exile David on the part of the high-priest Abimelech. The measure of iniquity was now full, and the hour of retribution was at hand. Yet gleams of nobleness shine out from the declining years of the warrior king. His sun was going down in darkness and blood, but once in a while the clouds would part, and the pure light of his morning brightness would break forth. Hateful as David was to him, he had frequent relentings, and his heart yearned towards the companion of his son and the husband of his daughter. The memory of former times came over him as with a magical spell, and he sighed for the innocence of his youth and the counsellor of his earlier years. But he sighed for the return of that counsellor when regret was of no avail. The evil spirit had too long been his adviser, to lead him to trust in the venerable prophet and statesman, whilst that good angel of his fortunes was yet alive.

He sought him from beyond the tomb, and the phantom of the cave was to him sufficient proof that the fall of his fortunes, so long declining, was at hand.

In the first stage of his royal career he had looked to the Lord of hosts as his inspiration. The evil spirit ruled his heart in the second stage. The phantom of Endor most fitly marks the third stage, and reveals and explains the final fall.

Upon the philological or philosophical criticism of the passage relating to the witch of Endor, we cannot dwell. The moral is very clear. The king was in great trouble, on the eve of a decisive battle with the Philistines under discouraging auspices. He sought council of priest and prophet in vain. He longed to take advice of the sage Samuel, but Samuel had been two years in his grave at Ramah. The superstitious king sought the cave of a weird woman, who was thought to possess the power of divination. Assuring the woman of pardon for violating the law against witchcraft, Saul bade her bring up Samuel. He himself saw nothing, but listened to the woman's description. What a response that description must have had from within his own soul. The king said unto her, "What form is he of?" And she said, "An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle." Whence the voice came that spoke in the name of the departed prophet, and told Saul of his impending doom and the fall of his house, we cannot say. Its power was, however, sorely in the conscience of Saul, for the words of the phantom were but a repetition of what had been said by the prophet years before to the king. The doom was only now near at hand. The king, with his sons, was to fall on the morrow before the Philistines.

The king fell to the earth, so feeble and heart-broken that the heart of the crone was touched, and this

outlawed woman entertained Saul with a fatted calf and unleavened bread. The morrow came, and with its sun the star of the royal family was to set for ever. Dispirited, the king was still king, and cowardice never entered his heart. The Hebrew melodist of our age has not exaggerated his courage in the well-known lines:—

“ Warriors and chiefs! should the shaft or the sword
Pierce me in leading the host of the Lord,
Heed not the corse, though a king's, in your path,
Bury your steel in the bosoms of Gath.

“ Thou who art bearing my buckler and bow,
Should the soldiers of Saul look away from the foe,
Stretch me that moment in blood at thy feet!
Mine be the doom which they dared not to meet.

“ Farewell to others, but never we part,
Heir to my royalty, son of my heart!
Bright is the diadem, boundless the sway,
Or kingly the death, which awaits us to-day.”

With his three sons, on Mount Gilboa he fell. How striking are the associations connected with his death. Hatred, loyalty, friendship, seem to stand around him in his death. In the Philistines, hatred came. They cut off the king's head, hung his armor in the temple of Ashtaroath, and fastened his body to the walls of Beth-shan. In the tribe of Manasseh loyalty appeared and did honor to the fallen throne. The people of the city once so bravely rescued by Saul sent valiant men, who took the bodies of the slain from the walls of Beth-shan, and buried their ashes under a tree near the place of his first victory. But far off, from the confines of Philistia, a voice was heard, so thrilling and mournful that its pathos is felt to our day, and is repeated in every requiem over

departed greatness. From the harp of the exile, the minstrel who charmed away Saul's melancholy, the companion of so many battles and the bosom friend of his son, friendship paid her tribute and raised her imperishable monument.

"The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places:
How are the mighty fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Askelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
Ye mountains of Gilboa! let there be no dew,
Neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings:
For there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away,
The shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided:
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!"

Thus died the first of the Hebrew kings. Judge him strictly, yet judge him fairly, remembering indeed the Christian standard of character, yet not forgetting that he lived more than ten centuries before Christ, and before the many noted kings renowned in history existed. His life, briefly as we have sketched it, shows the man. He was a strong rather than a wise or exalted man. His sphere was not in the kingdom of ideas. A mighty and impassioned will was his power. Shrewdness and discrimination he did not lack, whether in selecting his officers or veiling his stratagems. In language that might fitly describe the policy of Napoleon, it is quaintly said, "When Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him." His moral and religious traits were

strongly marked, yet by no means without parallels in kings. There was a singular union of tender and devout sentiment with ferocious passion. He was now melted into penitence and faith by a Hebrew ode, and now hurling a deadly weapon at his chief benefactor, — now rashly entering a school of the prophets to lay hold of his intended victim, and arrested at once by the power of music and the force of association, joining in the sacred ceremonial and sinking into a trance of devout ecstasy. This, however, is the old story, so often repeated in the annals of fighting devotees, — the Charlemagnes, Williams, and Richards of religious warfare. Now passion and bloodshed, — now penitence and prayer, — the union of the two symbolized perhaps in the weapon of slaughter, the trenchant blade held by a cruciform handle. Blending martial daring with religious enthusiasm like Constantine, a despot in temper and a murderer of priests like Henry the Eighth, haunted by the despot's not uncommon disease, a moody madness, like the Czar Peter, Saul was a man more to be admired and pitied than loved or imitated.

How full of lessons is the record of his life, — how fruitful too is it in suggestion !

As a man, he should interest every man in his career, for how nearly alike are all men in their trials and vicissitudes ! A work was given him to do, as it is given to us all. He did his work in many respects nobly, and always bravely. He was yet, on the whole, untrue to his mission, — false to his best adviser. How striking and significant the close of his career, — how illustrative of the lot of all unfaithfulness ! Who that has enjoyed wise counsel

only to slight it,—who that has been blessed with faithful and judicious parents, teachers, advisers, and, violating their confidence, walked in reckless passion and self-will,—can help attaching a terrible meaning to the phantom of the cave, and has not repeated it in personal experience, as the shade of the past, the spirit of departed benefactors, has risen in retribution before the soul. Nay, what is the judgment-day itself but the repetition of that scene, the rising up in judgment of Him who came in mercy to save the world. Let the individual then learn the lesson, and work wisely while it is called to-day.

But Saul ruled a nation. There is a lesson for the nation in his career. In him the Hebrews passed from a republic to a monarchy, not that the monarchy was in itself as good as the republic, but because the people were not good enough to be free. They were not faithful to a government of laws, and they were called to a government of persons, not indeed without legal limits, but whose legal limits were easily broken down by regal power. When in this country will the scenes of Mizpah and Gilgal be renewed? When the sin of Israel is repeated, and our people, untrue to their mission as a peaceful, industrious republic, without standing army, shall become a war-like nation, glorying in armies and victories, and shall cry out for the successful soldier to save them from faction, anarchy, or invasion, and, whatever the name of the office, the soldier shall be king. Should that oft-repeated circle of events in the history of republics be renewed here, it would not be from want of prophet minds to point out the danger and the doom. Our Samuel's ashes rest not at Ramah, but on Mount

Vernon. The men of our nation should need no magical incantations nor sepulchral phantoms to keep before them the image of that providential chief, with his grave and majestic features, his life so mighty at once in lessons of command and obedience. Would to God that the rulers of our nation would make, each year, a solemn pilgrimage to the tomb of Washington, and guide their counsels as in presence of that august soul!

Who can read the farewell address of the last of the Hebrew judges, without thinking of a grand historical parallel? "And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes therewith? And I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, He is witness."

But last of all, there is a great question to be decided for humanity, as well as for individuals and nations, in connection with our topic. No question is more important in its bearings than this. Saul is one of a class that appear in every age, and always wield vast power. What shall be done with him? What shall we give him to do? He is the type of the strong

man, the king man, who, whatever be his sphere, will rule, be it in a village or a city, in a workshop or a kingdom. Such men have had their way in great part since the age of the giant Hebrew, and probably ages before. With us, of course, merely physical size and muscular strength go for little, but the mighty and impassioned will, like that of Saul, is powerful as ever, even in this age of peaceful industry, science, and art. Such a will must do great things; what shall we try to make it do, that its great things may be good things? The question comes home to us. Think of the vast masculine energy in this land. Look at the strong youth of Young America. In his own opinion, head and shoulders taller than the standard of the Old World, the strong youth presents himself before his teachers for worthy occupation. Not without generosity and aspiration, he is restless and impassioned, and demands an exciting, engrossing career. What is there for him to do? The world is before him with all its labors and prizes: the ocean tempts him to manly daring and profitable adventure; traffic spreads her wares, and entices him by the hazard of her competition; political life displays her arena and holds out her rewards. But notwithstanding all this, is there not a deplorable want of a nobler and more stirring career for the strong man than any thus opened? Are not some of the generous elements of our constitution sadly slighted by our prevalent way of life? Ought not the arts of peace to be so perfected, and the modes of labor and enterprise to be so arranged, that all that is thrilling and exulting in the old heroic times may be retained, giving beauty and enthusiasm to daily life, and gaining power in

gaining purity ? Is it for this sharp, gambling, trafficking age, that humanity has gone through so many trials ? Is this all that we are to have ? Is it using God's creatures according to God's will, when we deny our young Sauls the hope of thrones and trophies, when we discountenance martial music and pageantry, to hold out as a substitute the marketplace and exchange ? O no ! Saul deserves better things than that. He whose heart thrills at prophetic chants, and feels the power of the old national heroism, cannot be satisfied with the clink of dollars and the parley of buyers and sellers. This fact is often found out in modern days, and sadly abused. For want of something better, the youth of the nations are inflamed with martial enthusiasm, and the war spirit breathes from their lips and sounds in their songs. Over the world, still Saul pants for battle, religion mingles with military ardor, and the god invoked in the conflict is after the manner of the old dispensation, and the war-hymn to Jehovah of hosts sounds above the gentle prayer to "our Father in heaven." With us, Saul has of late girded himself for the conflict as against the Philistine of the South-western border. Strange too to tell, he joined in the sacred songs, — Saul is indeed among the prophets. The rough backwoodsman, — the fiery Southerner, — the restless wanderer from our own New England, — each was heard sanctioning warfare, and even invasion, by religious sanctions, and a sacred mission was claimed for the armies of this republic, beyond aught ever claimed for the Hebrew theocracy. Is Saul indeed among the prophets ? Truly he is. The prophetic ode, the confident prayer, the impassioned ha-

range, all inflaming the martial spirit by stories of destiny manifested or providence revealed, stir the youth's heart's-blood, and lo! he is turned into another man. Who shall say what new fires are to break out in Europe and in America from brave natures demanding an appropriate sphere? Would that so powerful incentives were fitly directed! Would that a truer Christian civilization existed among us, giving a sphere for every generous faculty and noble sentiment, — making the path of life stirring as a military march, yet gentle and humane as the Dove of heaven! The spirit that shall do this is in the Bible, — in the hearts of Christ and the Apostles, — in the doctrine of the kingdom of God on earth as in heaven. It has not been carried out. Its true consummation is not in the armies of the cross, who slew millions to win an empty tomb and renew a defunct theocracy, nor in the gloomy ascetics who sought heaven by a living death on earth. It shall be found in a true order, the result of true principle and regulating the affairs of this world after the standard of the Divine kingdom. It shall give room for every class of minds, for the wise man and for the strong. Saul shall find enough to do without shedding his brother's blood. A strain shall soothe the evil spirit within, more moving than the harp of David; a hymn shall rouse his manly will, more stirring than the national anthems of the prophetic schools. Strong youth shall take reverent counsel of mature wisdom, and receiving from its hands a royal unction, shall go forth nobly to its work, never to desert its post until death. As life goes on, the spirit of the present shall be refreshed by visitations of the shades of the past. The image of Sam-

uel shall haunt with benedictions the pillow of Saul, and bless him in dreams. Gilboa, when it comes, shall come without curse. The beauty of Israel must still fall upon our high places. But the mount of death shall be as the mount of transfiguration. Gilboa shall shine with the light of the neighboring Tabor. The glorious form of Christ and the shades of Law-giver and Prophet shall stand forth, instead of faces of hatred and implements of blood.

V.

DAVID AND THE PSALMS.

THE life of man is full of contrasts. Cottage and palace have alike their eventful drama, different as may be the interest taken in them by the world at large. In the lives of the great all are concerned, and their rise and fall impresses a lesson which the humblest lot ought to teach. After the night comes the morning; after the storm, the calm. Lamentation for the dead is soon followed by shouts of joy for his successor; after the funeral, the favored heir counts the treasure reserved for him; after a king's death, the streets, so lately filled with melancholy processions, resound with triumphal pageants, and the crown, so lately worn by him now in the tomb, sparkles upon the head just exalted to the throne. The record of the life of Saul closes with the pathetic elegy breathed from the harp of the exile in Philistia. The jubilee soon followed the elegy. Saul and his brave sons rested in death beneath the oak of Jabesh-Gilead. The men of Judah met at Hebron, and called David to the throne.

There is something in every great event of life that gives the faculty of memory a peculiar vividness, and, at each signal success or affliction, the doors of the

past seem to be thrown wide open, and we see all things that we have ever been, or done, or suffered, or enjoyed, or known. We need little aid to assure us what were the remembrances that flashed through the mind of the young king at Hebron, when he first heard that shout, — to the heart of prince and of subject always so thrilling, — “God save the king!” The former times came before him, and he saw the leadings of Providence in his eventful history. Never, indeed, had thirty years of life been more eventful than his.

First, and, because first, the deepest, stood the remembrance of his shepherd days, when he tended his father's flocks upon the plains and steppes of Judah, and by his harp peopled the wild solitude with voices and shapes of power and beauty. Dimly, perhaps, lingered upon his mind the image of a venerable man, who came to his home in Bethlehem, and, singling him out among his brothers, predicted for him, then a ruddy youth of fifteen, a royal destiny. Then ere long came his knowledge of the court and camp of Saul, the splendor and uncertainty of princes' favors. Simply, yet mightily armed, used to strike the harp and wield the sling, the shepherd-boy of Bethlehem obeyed the command of his prince. With the music he charmed away the evil spirit of the moody monarch, and soon after with the weapon smote the Philistine giant to the earth. Fact of history, — how often repeated in the world! — illustrating the force of simple nature, true to the call of God, in winning the soul to peace and power, and in overcoming arrogant material strength by the fervor of its faith and the vehemence of its daring.

Then came the years of exile,— of exile brought on not by treachery, but by too successful fidelity to the national cause,— of exile how eventful and romantic! Fugitive from Saul's wrath, he roamed the country, first a solitary, then with a few young men, and at last with a band of free companions. What materials in this chapter of his experience for his imagination to work upon! Suppliant for charity before the high-priest, and glad even of a morsel of bread from that consecrated place to which none but the priest might resort; again, demanding supplies for himself and companions of the rich herdsman, Nabal, in return for the protection of his property from the Arabs; taking refuge now in the caves of Adullam and Engedi, and now in the forests of Zeph and Hareth; and at times forced to flee into Moab and Philistia;— throughout all these vicissitudes he preserved his allegiance to the theocracy, repeatedly spared the life of the king who sought to destroy him, and, in spite of tempting opportunities, never turned his forces against his country.

All these things had passed; the minstrel-shepherd, the Hebrew champion, the adventurous exile, now reached a period new in dignity, yet no less eventful. At Hebron, David is king. His reign we do not mean to describe with any minuteness. We are concerned with him chiefly as the sacred poet, and our glance at his royal career will be principally to illustrate his mental experience and poetic power. We must know the grounds of his glory and shame to learn the sources of his inspiration.

For years his glory knew no bounds. At first he was acknowledged king by a single tribe, the tribe of

Judah, ever most loyal to the theocracy. Thus he reigned seven years and a half. Then his own renown, and the death of Ishbosheth and Abner, turned towards him the favor of the whole nation. His claims to the throne were allowed upon the ground of his providential victories and his theocratic appointment. In a vast assembly from all the tribes, he was once more proclaimed king at Hebron; the great multitude partook of a generous banquet, "for there was great joy in Israel."

His power thus legitimated, a brilliant career was at once opened to him. The empire must have a metropolis. To establish one was at the same time to defeat an enemy and to consolidate an empire. With true theocratic spirit, he would complete the conquest of the country, still held in part by the old enemy. He stormed the fortress of Jebus on Mount Zion, and by this deed of war won to Israel the city whose name is peace, and the king's home was now Jerusalem. Not in peace, however, was his policy conducted. Every enemy felt the power of his arms, and the Philistines were so completely broken as never to make head against him or his successors.

What his spirit was, in this meridian of his glory, is obvious from the use he made of his conquest of Jerusalem. This city was now to become the centre of the theocracy. Jehovah must hallow the metropolis, and the capital of the Hebrew king must also be the capital of the invisible and eternal Sovereign. His first act in the interval of warfare was to remove the sacred ark to Jerusalem, and consecrate to its reception a new abode on Mount Zion. This was a great day in Israel, and David yielded himself up to the

enthusiasm of the scene, threw off his royal garments, and, in the linen ephod of a simple Levite, joined in the sacred songs and dances with his renowned harp. The spirit of this occasion is well expressed in the Song of Dedication, ending thus : —

“ Let God arise, and his enemies are scattered ;
And they that hate him flee before him.
Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ;
Sing praises to Jehovah !
To him who rideth upon the ancient heaven of heavens !
Behold, he uttereth his voice, his mighty voice !
Give glory to God,
Whose majesty is in Israel, and whose might is in the clouds !
Terrible art thou, O God, from thy sanctuary !
The God of Israel giveth strength and power to his people ;
Praised be God ! ” — Psalm lxviii.

The reception of the ark was but the beginning of David's reorganization of the national worship. The division of priests and Levites, the arrangements of the ritual, the preparation for the gorgeous worship of the future temple, — all was the work of his administration. These acts of faith were also acts of true policy, for the nation had unity and loyalty, as the mother-city was identified with the honor of Jehovah and the Law. It is not strange that this zeal for the national altar should be followed by new success in arms. He reached the limit of Hebrew conquest, and his empire extended to the Euphrates on the east, and the Red Sea on the south. To conquest he added the influence of the arts of peace, and a new era opened on Israel in the commercial treaty with the king of Tyre. One thing only seemed wanting to his glory ; — the erection of a fit temple for the worship of Jehovah. The disposition and the means were

abundant. But, with singular significance, the prophet Nathan informed him, that he had been too much a man of blood to perform this work, and the great king was obliged to leave this majestic enterprise for the more peaceful reign of his successor.

But in this world glory and shame are often near companions. While David's glory was in its prime, however, let it not be forgotten, that he was mindful of the friends of his humbler days, and how kindly he befriended the lame youth, son of Jonathan, and how courteously he treated the heir of the Ammonite king. But the hour of his shame drew near. His crime I will describe only in the prophet's thrilling parable and in the king's penitential Psalm.

"There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him and his children, and it ate of his own morsel and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him like a daughter. Now a traveller came to the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress for the traveller that had come to him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that had come to him."

The king's wrath flamed up at once at the story of so foul a wrong, and he denounced death upon the doer. "Thou art the man!" was the prophet's reply. Humiliation took the place of vengeance. The king owned his guilt. What can equal the pathos of the Psalm ascribed to this period? — it is the world-renowned *Miserere*.

"Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to thy loving-kindness.
According to the multitude of thy tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in thy sight.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart thou wilt not despise."

But guilt like his was not to be atoned for even by such penitence, nor by the offering of this immortal Psalm. Bitter retribution was to come. A shadow now fell upon the royal house of David, and the coming event was not long delayed. Throughout the old dispensation, we are more than once reminded of that dark fatality which broods over the creations of the Greek tragic poets, and the dooms of Saul and David have some affinity with those of the race of *Œdipus* and *Agamemnon*. Yet not blind fate, but righteous retribution, guides the judgments decreed under the Hebrew theocracy. Singularly, yet not inaptly chosen, was the agent of David's terrible punishment. Not by some *Alecto*, wreathed with serpents,—not by the awful shade of the departed prophet,—not by the sword of the Philistine, nor the dagger of the assassin, his doom came. The messenger of vengeance came in a form as beautiful as the king's own music, and as perverse as his own sin. His darling child, lovely in person and fascinating in address, with a disposition spoiled in part undoubtedly by the father's indulgence, and corrupted by the wily art of the intriguing *Ahithophel*, was the instrument of shame and woe. I need not speak of *Absalom's* assassination of his brother *Ammon*, and the outrage

which provoked the deed; nor can I enter into the particulars of that revolt, which the muse of Dryden has somewhat perversely connected with an interesting passage of British history. Bitter the king's flight from his palace and city, before the army of Absalom; more bitter far the victorious return, when, among those who welcomed him, he missed the form of him most dear, and wept at the thought of his dishonored grave. The rebellion of the tribes had combined with the revolt of his son to weigh down the king's heart, and the depth of his sadness can be described only in his own thrilling lyrics. The "De Profundis," in its pathos, is the counterpart of the "Miserere" with its penitence, and is an echo of his harp at least, whatever may be said by critics of its composition.

"Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord!
Lord, hear my voice.
I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait,
And in his word do I hope;
My soul waiteth for the Lord
More than they that watch for the morning;
I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

Ps. cxxx.

And none can fail to discern his own grief and genius in that noted forty-second Psalm, that has brought comfort to so many sufferers.

"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before God?
Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts;
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time,
And in the night his song shall be with me,
And my prayer unto the God of my life."

Deep did indeed call unto deep. Incest, murder, famine, pestilence, rebellion, treason, gathered around the house of David. Yet the king, in his darkest days, never appears to have abandoned what to him was the holiest of causes, — allegiance to the theocracy, — and through the trial of sin and shame he seems to have been strengthened in his devotion to the altar and the throne. Not without some rays of its meridian glory, his sun went down. Following the appointed method, he fixed upon his successor, and himself presided at the consecration of Solomon. No venal laureate, but the monarch-minstrel himself, furnished the coronation-hymn.

“Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever.

“Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name.” — 1 Chron. xxix.

Such was David's thanksgiving, and to this occasion the seventy-second Psalm has been assigned.

“Give the king thy judgments, O God,
And thy righteousness unto the king's son.
Yea, he shall judge thy people with righteousness,
And those oppressed, with justice.
For the mountains shall bring forth peace to the people,
And the hills righteousness.”

Six months only he lingered more. Taking leave of Solomon, in words remarkable at once for parental tenderness, theocratic zeal, and state policy, the great king died, and was buried at Jerusalem. He had reigned forty and lived seventy years.

With the events of his career, so striking and so familiar, we have dealt with all possible brevity. The lessons of his life will detain us longer. Of the man, the king, and the poet, we will now speak.

The *man*. As such, what shall we say of David? A man of genius, sensibility, force, undoubtedly, and also of passion and sin, — a character strangely mingled of heaven and of earth. Is it argued, that, since before his call to the throne Samuel designated him as a “man after God’s own heart,” therefore he must have been perfection? We reply, that the Scripture itself records his guilt and its doom, and, moreover, the words of Samuel, so controverted by letter-bigots and letter-sceptics, amount simply to a statement on the part of the prophet, that David was the providential man best fitted to carry out the Divine plans in the government of the chosen people. Let these word-pugilists settle their difficulty between themselves. We follow the sacred historian in our estimate of the man. We find in him an intellect less profound than expansive, less prone to scientific analysis than to poetical comparison; a fancy unsurpassed in exuberance, and an imagination rivalled only by the elder bards, like Moses and the author of Job, and the later prophets, like Isaiah and Joel. In practical matters, his mind was more distinguished for magnificence and grandeur in the general plan, than for careful prudence in the details. His emotions, his loves and hatreds, stood often in the way of his prudence. He was eminently a man of emotion, and, excepting always his unfailing allegiance to the theocracy, his character was far more one of impulse than of principle. He could love, and he

could hate; he could be grateful for kindness years after it was received; he could remember a grudge, even when the gathering shades of the tomb should have brought more tender and sacred thoughts to the soul. In him we see, as never before, an example of religious sensibility, not always governed by religious principle. His heart, like his harp, was ready to vibrate to every breeze of emotion; but the depth and compass of its tones, like those of his harp, appeared only when its strings were touched in praise and thanksgiving, confession and prayer, and breathed the airs of Zion. In force of will, he was remarkable rather for heroic enthusiasm than for sustained fortitude. His great deeds seem, like his lyrics, to have been bursts of emotion. As a soldier, he had not the determined, persevering valor of Joshua and Saul; as a statesman, he sinks far below the majesty of Moses and the dignity of Samuel. He had, however, elements of magnanimity, and these were nowhere more marked than in his taking to himself the blame for an unwarranted act, that drew retribution upon the nation. "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord, my God, be on me and on my father's house, but not on thy people, that they should be plagued."

As *king*, to the Hebrew race, he was the paragon of royalty, the type of the Messiah. He gave his country extended territory by his conquests, and civil and ecclesiastical order by his administration. In his mind royalty was a sacred thing, even the representative of the Divine throne; and therefore he regarded

his enemies as the enemies of God, and deemed his trophies sacred offerings. In this respect, more than in his religious tenderness, other monarchs have copied his example, and consecrated sceptre and sword by divine prerogatives. By some kings, his better spirit has been imitated, and the royal minstrel, who acted by his odes so powerfully upon the education of his people, has had more than one parallel among crowned heads. Alfred, who played the harp also, translated the Psalms, and Charlemagne, in the literary conversations at his court, took the name and personated the character of David.

But it is in connection with the golden age of the Messiah, that the name of the great king has been most powerful. Jew and Christian, Puritan, Quaker, Churchman, nay, even the Swedish spiritualist, as earnestly as the allegorizing Romanist, look upon David's royalty as the type of the Messiah's kingship. Into this subject we cannot enter. It is enough to say, that there must be some sovereign power, whether in prince or people, and that sovereignty is therefore divinely ordained; and that the reign of the Messiah over the spiritual order may be fitly illustrated from the empire of the most conspicuous prince of the chosen nation in temporal things. Christ is king. The Prince of Peace is Lord over the New Jerusalem, the City of Peace, not of this world. "Hosanna to the Son of David!" was the shout fitly raised, as the Son of Man entered Jerusalem, to find a cross in the place of a crown. He died with one of the Psalms of David on his lips, uttering only its first mournful stanza when death closed his lips, and ere he could speak the triumphal strain of its close. "Hosanna

to the Son of David!" we all say. May the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of God and his Christ!

To us now, the man and the king survives chiefly in the *poet*. He is the poet of all nations, all lands, all creeds. In extent of influence, Homer, Pindar, Shakspeare, Milton, are as obscure names and move in narrow circles. The Psalms are read and sung throughout the world, by childhood and by age; they have for centuries been the language of devotion among millions to whom the great names of classic letters have been unknown sounds. Whence their power, is it asked? We reply, In their form, their genius, and their subject, with its associations.

Their *form* commends them to the human heart. They are lyrics, and as such they are songs of feeling, and address themselves to the affections. Lyric poetry is peculiarly the poetry of the emotions, and as such has ever had more power than the epic poem, which describes events, or the dramatic poem, which represents action. In spirit impassioned, and in length and movement corresponding with the rise and fall of human emotion, lifting the heart upward by their swelling strains, and not demanding a continued stretch of thought and feeling, too long or severe for the common mind, the Psalms in their very form as lyrics have devotional power.

Their rhythm, if such their verse can be called, adds to their efficacy. Not framed in measured feet, much less drawn out in regular rhyme, they follow the simplest law of rhythm, and the versification may be compared to the dance of happy children, untaught by artificial schools, and moving in easy and natural

figures without measured steps. There is a general uniformity of structure without metrical verse. The unmetrical rhythm of the Hebrew lyrics follows a law of parallelism, in which the second line generally answers to, or contrasts with, the first. Thus, to take the most obvious illustrations : —

“ The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof ;
 The world, and they that dwell therein.
 For he hath founded it upon the seas,
 And established it upon the floods.”

Again : —

“ For his anger endureth but a moment,
 But his favor through life ;
 Sorrow may be a guest for the night,
 But joy cometh in the morning.”

This law of parallelism appears in various combinations, and gives spirit to the poetry by its union of variety with uniformity. With less uniformity it would become prose, with less variety it would be too artificial verse. Its rhythm is based upon a natural law. The Psalms move to the measure of Nature. Her movement is a grand parallelism, in which each tone has its echo, each object its image, and every thing that exists has a response, positive or negative, from its neighbor, and the whole universe is bound by the law of attraction and repulsion. But we must not dwell upon the form.

The *genius* of the Psalms is the genius of the principal author, who has given them name and character. The collection, as it exists in our Bible, is to be regarded as the Hebrew Anthology, or, perhaps more fitly, as the hymn-book of the Hebrew church. David is named in the titles as the chief writer, although six names are given in addition to his. Seventy-one of

the one hundred and fifty are expressly ascribed to him. What is his genius? Its chief characteristic is eminently this, — the power to embody every emotion of the heart in language and imagery at once simple, graphic, exalted. He uses the familiar objects of nature as his alphabet of expression, and trees, hills, mountains, seas, heavens, birds, beasts, men, range themselves at his bidding, and become interpreters of his soul. Every state of feeling has its speaking imagery. Thus, under how many aspects of tenderness and sublimity Jehovah is presented! now as the careful Shepherd, and now as the omniscient Judge and almighty King: —

“The Lord is my Shepherd,
I shall not want.”

“Thy righteousness is like the great mountains,
Thy judgments like the great deep.”

“He that dwelleth under the care of the Most High,
And abideth under the shadow of the Almighty,
He saith to Jehovah, ‘Thou art my refuge,
My fortress, and my God; in thee will I trust.’”

The same powerful genius is shown in portraying every mood of human feeling, and all the aspects of life and providence. Well did Martin Luther say, “Where do we find a sweeter voice of joy than in the Psalms of thanksgiving and praise? There you look into the heart of all the holy, as into a beautiful garden,—as into heaven itself. What delicate, sweet, and lovely flowers are there springing up, of all manner of beautiful, joyous thoughts towards God and his goodness! On the other hand, where do you find more profound, mournful, pathetic expressions of sorrow, than the plaintive Psalms contain? There, again, you look

into the heart of all the holy, but as into death ; nay, as into the very pit of despair. I hold that there has never appeared on earth, and never can appear, a more precious book of examples and legends of saints than the Psalter is. It forms, as it were, a little book of all saints, in which every man, in whatever situation he may be placed, shall find Psalms and sentiments which shall apply to his own case, and be the same to him as if they were for his own sake alone, so expressed, that he could not express them himself, nor find, nor even wish them better than they are." What genius, indeed, is here ! — what inspiration !

Perhaps sweetness is quite as characteristic of David as sublimity, and his muse is less like the eagle than, in his own words,

" Like the wings of a dove covered with silver,
And her feathers with shining gold."

Tragic, almost to the verge of despair, as his tone often is, yet it never reaches the brink, and is always sure to recover itself, and out of darkness rise into the light. There is a virtual prophecy of the Gospel in the victorious strain with which he never fails to celebrate his triumphs over despair and death.

But whatever the genius of the man, the inspiration was chiefly in the subject. And what a subject ! However various the form or manner, the subject ever essentially the same, — the relation of the soul of man, in all its vicissitudes, to God and his Providence. To God his muse is ever consecrated. Whatever the theme or mood, Jehovah is always the inspiration of the Psalm. To Jehovah the soul of the poet opens all its experience, and thanksgiving, praise, supplication, penitence, confession, all have thus their full

expression ; and thus, in speaking to God for himself, the Psalmist treats of the nature and needs of all men, — nay, of man's relations to God, and the doctrine of life and salvation. The Psalter is thus a book of experimental divinity, the theology for the heart, if not always for the understanding. It means more than it expresses, and, as is the case with all high poetry, it implies far more truth than it defines. Its implicit faith comprehends far more than its explicit doctrine.

There is power even in the passages often deemed objectionable for Christian use, — the denunciations of the writer's enemies. By the many who take their idea of the Church Militant from the Jewish theocracy, the imprecations of David have been employed against heretics ; and by more humane minds, these passages, if used at all, have been turned to a nobler than the original aim, and been directed against the powers of darkness, or vice and sin in all its forms. We rejoice not in the imprecatory passages of the Psalter, nor use them in our worship. Yet let us remember, that, if there is a fanaticism that stands parallel with their strain of denunciation, there is an utter indifference, and practical scepticism, that is beneath even fanaticism, and has no harsh word for sin, because sin and righteousness are equally indifferent, and the empire of God is of no more account than that of Satan. Better, however, to rise above indifference without stopping in fanaticism. Better go beyond David to Christ, than fall below David into utter worldliness.

Are the Psalms Christian, — fully so ? In them Christianity surely is not fully developed, either in spirit or in doctrine ; but in them it exists potentially,

and, moved by an inspiration passing his own understanding, David uttered words whose meaning it has been reserved for the Gospel to develop. Much that appears in him as vague aspiration or dim intimation comes to light when interpreted by Christianity. The germs of divine life that sleep beneath the sod are quickened by the Gospel sun, and have put forth blossom and fruit. Connected organically with the progressive development of religion, the literature of true inspiration ever bears within itself prophetic seeds, and the seed of God in the soul of David was fully developed only in the Word of Christ. His poetry belongs not solely to his own personality, but to that holy Word, or Divine Reason, that moved him to speak in a wisdom and aspiration transcending his own comprehension. Sometimes a Psalm is expressive of a good beyond itself by its very yearning, and thus the poet holds out a golden cup, which the heavenly nectar, the water of life, alone can fitly fill.

When we say that we believe that there is special inspiration in the Psalms, we mean to assert, that the author, with all his frailties, was called to discharge a providential mission, and that his best poems develop or imply divine truths to an extent and with a power beyond the reach of the unaided faculties of the human mind. We believe, that, under a system of religion based upon supernatural sanctions, he was the divinely chosen bard. As to exact definitions of the extent of his inspiration, we have none to give. The whole subject is more in the sphere of religion than theology, and needs little elucidation on the part of letter-critics and word-mongers, in order to satisfy a religious heart

It is well, then, to use the Psalter in Christian devotion, alike for what it is in itself, and for the higher light and life which the Son of David has given to its strains; for surely the Messiah has strung anew the harp of his great ancestor, and the airs of Zion now breathe the spirit of the New Jerusalem. Their true meaning will be known in this world only when the Messiah's kingdom triumphs, and the order of heaven reigns on earth, in a Christian civilization, a consecrated literature, a Divine Order over man in his relations to the universe, his neighbor, and his God.

Interesting must be the parallel between the king who reigned on Zion and the King who died on Calvary. Elaborately it has been drawn out in the most minute particulars. We cannot stop to criticize the old, or to devise new resemblances and contrasts. But who does not ask, Where is the harp of the Messiah, Son of David? Why did he not come to lead men captive to himself and the Father, by strains heavenly in form as in power? Poetic inspiration is a divine gift, and why was it not exhibited in the life of the perfect humanity so divinely endowed? We reply, His life was the divine harmony which only itself can fitly declare, and its significance is beyond the compass of any poem to express. Its thanksgiving rises above every hallelujah, its sorrow is deeper than the "Miserere," its experience beyond the "De Profundis." The life of Christ is the Psalter of the Christian, and gives their best power to the Hebrew Psalms. That life has been the inspiration of Christian literature, and the spirit that animated it still breathes upon the faithful, and the harp of the New Jerusalem, never yet silent, waits only the favored

hour to pour out its inspiration in harmonies of verse and in harmonies of action.

We need a better direction of human talent and Christian enterprise. Our lyrics are of war, pleasure, strife, partisanship. They should be of God and humanity, peace, freedom, purity, love. God asks for every faculty of man as his own, and claims dominion over every sphere of life. Nobly the Hebrew consecrated his genius to the Divine King, and millions and centuries have said, "Amen!" When will the literature of the world, with all its affluent stores, give its allegiance to God, and its history, philosophy, poetry, be devoted to his service? When shall the bard arise, whose lyrics shall quicken the energies and consecrate the uses of the Christian empire, as David's harp kindled the zeal and directed the enterprises of the Jewish theocracy?

But without anticipating some millennial age of Christian unity and devotion, we are to learn from the harp of David the power of a devout spirit, and the means of its culture. In this calculating time, when second causes are so often viewed apart from the great First Cause, and low utility usurps the place of spiritual faith, we need such helpers as the sweet Psalmist of Israel. We need the aid of an inspiration that looks upward and gives glory to God. This want is felt by not a few with unutterable yearning, and to some minds, not wanting in wisdom, there is more true philosophy in the Psalmist's view of creation and its Creator, man and his Sovereign, than in all the systems that have sought to resolve the universe into material laws, or history into fatalistic agencies. The too prevalent materialism of our time leaves the soul

dreary and orphaned. It has no earnest response, and is rebuked at once by the thoughts of the best philosophers of nature, as by the highest names in poetry. Kepler and Newton, Pascal and Swedenborg, have quite as little affinity as the muse of David and Milton with the soulless theories of Helvetius and D'Holbach. The common heart much more feels the need of higher faith, and responds to the Hebrew's strain.

What a view of his influence is given by thinking of the numbers moved by his Psalms in a year or month, nay, in a single day! It is said that the power of sound is never lost, and the vibrations of every word ring eternally through the all-pervading air. If so, how the universal ether vibrates to the tones of the Hebrew harp and the words of its hallowed Psalms! Each day, nay, each hour, the whole Psalter is many times repeated by men, and the whole earth thus rings with the old temple chants. Could we listen to the sounds that are borne on the winds of the winter night, every breeze would come to us laden with a Psalm, as from Sinai to the Alleghanies, from China to Oregon, those anthems and litanies are repeated, whether by assembled worshippers or solitary devotees. Let the strain continue till the end of time, encircling the earth continually, when drums shall beat and cannon sound no more. Let the strain continue till the end of time, — the world's matin and vesper, noonday, midnight, perennial hymn. Add our voices now to the strain, and let the air bear it on in the everlasting current of vibration: —

“ Give unto the Lord the glory due to his name ;
Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

VI.

SOLOMON AND THE HEBREW WISDOM

How rich and suggestive the historic picture presented when David, bowed down with years and infirmity, stood up to commend young Solomon to the assembled nation as the rightful king! The sweet Psalmist of Israel stood upon the borders of the grave, the arm that slew the giant could now hardly grasp the old man's staff, and the hand that swept the harp trembled like its own magic strings. Still was he true to his high commission, — true to the altar and the throne, — resolved to resign them to the son best fitted to guard them well. David and Solomon! — the sire we know, but what of the son? Vain, indeed, the usual hope based upon a father's greatness. Was the hope of Israel vain in the high anticipation that thrilled the vast assembly as they raised the shout, God save King Solomon? That youth scarcely twenty years old, — what shall he be? How like, how unlike, the father, let our glance at his career show.

When Solomon came to the throne he brought with him no recollections of early hardship, adventure, and heroism such as had attended the youth of David. Bred up in a brilliant court, he shared nothing of the

danger and imbibed nothing of the daring incident to the shepherd boy of Bethlehem. Yet to a mind like his, the graver lessons of his father's reign could not have been for naught. He could appreciate the glory of David, and moralize also upon his shame. He knew of the factions of the empire, and the strifes of the palace. In his boyhood, he had fled with the royal household from the conspiracy of Absalom, and had watched the gathering clouds over the royal house. He was not deaf nor blind to the conversations and scenes of the varied life around, nor unmindful of the eloquence and wisdom of his teachers. To his taste, not to say to his piety, David's glorious lyrics could not but be attractive, nor to his sagacity could Nathan's keen and sententious wisdom have been lost.

Reigning six months during the lifetime of his father, before his twentieth year he occupied the throne by himself. We can glance at his career only from two or three principal points of view.

Passing over his method of removing the dangerous or treasonable persons indicated in the parting counsels of David, not dwelling upon his marriage with the daughter of the Egyptian king,—fact so expressive of the changed fortunes of the slave race delivered by the Exodus,—we pause first upon the incident that marked the darling wish of his heart.

The vision of Gibeon! At Gibeon, the old Mosaic tabernacle and altar still remained, not being removed with the ark by David to Jerusalem. With commendable judgment and piety, the young king went thither for worship and sacrifice. Dreams often well interpret waking thoughts and indicate life purposes. In a dream, the offer so gracious, yet so

fearful, was made to him, as from God, "Ask what I shall give thee." Should he ask for power to play the harp or wield the sword of David. Alas! he had seen how little able were harp and sword to save a soul from sin or a nation from its worst enemies. He thought of his own extreme youthfulness and the vastness of his cares and duties. He prayed for wisdom: "Give, therefore, thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad." The prayer was granted, with riches added to wisdom. Solomon awoke; and behold it was a dream. To Jerusalem he returned, and the dream became a reality. Sacred ever are the dreams of youth.

From the tabernacle at Gibeon turn to the temple on Mount Moriah. In that gorgeous edifice, the ancient tabernacle appears as if transfigured in gold and carved cedar. For seven years and a half the edifice had risen in silence. Enormous stones were hewn and fitted so as to be put together without the noise of axe or hammer, or any implement whatever. In the words of Heber:—

"No workman's steel, no ponderous axes rung;
Like some tall palm, the noiseless fabric sprung."

The day of dedication has come. The spacious courts of the temple were crowded as if with the gathered nation. In the court of the priests the whole tribe of Levi were assembled;—the sacrificers in robes of white linen, the musicians with trumpets, harps, cymbals, psalteries, stood around the brazen altar in front of the door of the temple. After a solemn sacrifice, at a given signal, a procession of priests appeared with the sacred ark, and approached

the door of the temple. The company of singers chanted undoubtedly the sublime psalm of dedication : —

“ Lift up your heads, O ye gates !
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors !
And the King of glory shall come in.”

From another part of the choir came the words :—

“ Who is this King of glory ? ”

Then rose the full chorus : —

“ The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.”

As the procession returned from the temple, having left the ark in the holy of holies, the vast choir sang the national thanksgiving anthem : —

“ O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good :
For his mercy endureth for ever.”

The whole place was overshadowed as with a cloud, and all hearts were prostrate before the sacred presence. But where was he who had erected this edifice and planned these solemnities ? Upon a brazen throne or scaffold, Solomon had viewed the august services. The priestly rites had been duly performed. As king, and the head of the people, he adds his part to the consecration. Who will wonder at his inspiration ? The scene itself was enough to call around him the shades of patriarchs, lawgivers, prophets, heroes. In the ark now enthroned stood the tables of the law given of God to Moses,—in the Psalms the devotion of David breathed its fervor, and a hundred harps seemed as if swept by the monarch-minstrel’s soul. The gold and cedar and brass of the temple all conspired with the popular joy to tell the king of his prosperous commerce and peaceful arts. One such day is a life beyond a thousand dull years. What

sublimity in his prayer as he knelt down with outspread hands, and said: "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart." What spirituality, as he continues: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold! the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded!" What grandeur in the closing words: "Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place, thou and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant." As the prayer closed, light flashed from heaven upon the assembly, the glory of God filled the place, the people bowed their faces to the ground, and from the great multitude rose the anthem, "Praise the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."

The temple thus consecrated, the king soon found himself sovereign of an empire and capital such as the earth had not before contained. The Red Sea and the Mediterranean were the tributaries of his greatness, and brought the treasures of Spain and the far Indies to his feet. Tadmor and Baalbec sprung as by enchantment in the wilderness, and connected the vast realms of inner Asia with Judea, and drew untold wealth thither in caravans. Silver was in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar-trees as sycamores. His fame reached to distant lands. Arabia celebrated him as a great enchanter, and the Queen of the South came, with rich gifts, to behold his magnificence and

admire his wisdom. How can such glory be ever dimmed? Alas! his greatness bore in itself the seeds of decay. With magnificence came luxury, and with luxury base lusts. From the vision of Gibeon, from the festival of Mount Moriah, turn to the hill of offence, and see to what abject folly and sin the peerless sage is brought. He who uttered that sublime prayer on Moriah has erected an idol temple on a height just opposite, and bows down to a heathen god,—in the language of Milton, to

“Ashtoreth, whom the Phœnicians called
Astarte, queen of heaven, with crescent horns;
To whose bright image nightly, by the moon,
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs;
In Sion also not unsung, where stood
Her temple on the offensive mountain, built
By that uxorious king, whose heart, though large,
Beguiled by fair idolatresses, fell
To idols foul.”

How could he fall so low, do we ask? The reply is, that intellectual wisdom is no sufficient safeguard against sensual passion and moral infirmity,—that his very fondness for magnificence may have led him to deck his capital with the splendors even of idolatrous pageants, and his ready intellect, enticed by his lusts, may have become the sophist pander to his senses, and palliated the acts which the religion of his fathers condemned. Shakspeare has well said:—

“None are so surely caught, when they are caught,
As wit turned fool. Folly in wisdom hatched
Hath wisdom’s warrant, and the help of school.
Folly in fools bears not so strong a note
As foolery in the wise, when wit doth dote;
Since all the power thereof it doth apply
To prove, by wit, worth in simplicity.”

Did the sage king ever rise from his dotage and repent of his sins? The sacred historian, as if in sadness at his fall, throws a veil of silence over his closing years, and ends the history of Solomon with indicating the woes that were to spring from the great offence. In an energetic youth of the tribe of Ephraim, an upstart from obscurity, rose the man who was to seize ten states of the empire, and thus break the sceptre of the king's son,—that son who, like another Charles the First, yielded the empire to another Cromwell, by increasing, instead of abating, the oppressive imposts of the former reign. With Solomon, the glory of the Hebrew kingdom went down, never to rise again. What view he took of the closing years of his life, we cannot say with any certainty. To this period, indeed, the composition of the Book of Ecclesiastes has been ascribed, and its constant burden, "Vanity, all is vanity," with its grave counsels upon obedience to God in youth before the silver cord is loosed or the golden bowl broken, would seem to favor this opinion. However, we can only say of Ecclesiastes, or the Words of the Preacher, that the general, although uncertain tradition, that he was the author, and in his latter years, gives an interesting idea of his greatness in its decline. Thus regarded, or thus interpreted, his wisdom vindicated itself in the midst of his infirmity, and the sage moralized profoundly over his pleasures and woes, even as the enthusiastic artist studied the waves that were rising to devour him, and sketched for the good of others the rock upon which his vessel foundered.

We will not, however, presume to lift the veil which the Scriptures have thrown over his latter days. Our

task is with facts and characteristics not veiled in doubt. The Hebrew sage is one of the world's great teachers ; his name has been and is a proverb among the nations. What estimate shall we form of him, — of him as man, as king, and moralist ?

As man he was wonderfully gifted. "How wise wast thou in thy youth," exclaimed the son of Sirach, "and as a flood filled with understanding ! Thy soul covered the whole earth, and thou filledst it with dark parables. Thy name went far unto the islands, and for thy peace wast thou beloved. The countries marvelled at thee for thy songs, and proverbs, and parables, and interpretations." "By the name of the Lord God, which is called the God of Israel, thou didst gather gold as tin, and silver as lead." "Thou didst stain thy honor and pollute thy seed : so that thou broughtest wrath upon thy children, and wast grieved for thy folly. So the kingdom was divided." Sagacity, that faculty by which one surveys at once a vast variety of particulars, and sees at a glance their true relations and practical bearing, was his chief characteristic. His sagacity was a sublime common-sense, and enabled him to judge of man, nature, and Providence as no one before the Saviour ever did. Nothing escaped his scrutiny, or failed to furnish him with facts, illustrations, or principles. He was a curious student of natural history, a learned botanist and zoologist. What his science of nature was, the loss of his scientific writings prevents our knowing, but his proverbs, in their apt and exquisite illustrations, show him to have been a wise student of nature, and observant of those analogies of which creation is so full. That he had the speculative acumen of the Greek

philosophers, we cannot say without making him the solitary exception among Hebrew minds, whose forte was not at all in philosophical analysis. Practical wisdom was his passionate study. His mind craved most to see things in their moral relations. He would be wise in that grand science, the knowledge of human life in its relations to Divine Providence. Even in his hours of meditative enthusiasm, the idea of knowledge was his inspiration, and his grandest ode is in honor of wisdom, — almost an apotheosis of this attribute of the Godhead. His song of devotion is not, like David's, of Him whose mercy endureth for ever, but of that All-seeing One, whose counsellor is eternal wisdom : —

“ The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.
I was set up from everlasting,
From the beginning or ever the earth was.
When there were no depths, I was brought forth ;
When there were no fountains abounding in water.
Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills, was I brought forth.
When he prepared the heavens, I was there :
When he set a compass upon the face of the depth,
When he established the clouds above,
When he strengthened the fountains of the deep,
When he gave to the sea his decree
That the waters should not pass his commandment,
When he appointed the foundations of the earth ;
Then I was by him, as one brought up with him.”

As to his moral traits, the sentiment of justice seemed to animate him far more than impulsive emotion, more even than religious sensibility. This sentiment in connection with his sagacity is stamped upon his renowned decisions and wonderful proverbs. It shines out from the memorable story of the two

mothers claiming each the mother's right to a child. "Divide the child in twain, and give to each the half," was the sagacious decree that discovered at once the real mother, who surrendered her claim rather than consent to the horrible partition which the king proposed, merely in order to force out the truth, and shame the pretender by appealing to the instincts of nature to guide the decision of justice. That he was in conviction a religious man, we cannot but believe, and that he cherished a profound sense of responsibility to God. His temptation came not as to his father. He was not a lyrical, impassioned, heroic character like David. His vice, like his virtue, was of another stamp. He was a man of magnificent tastes, rather than rapt imagination, of intellectual concentration, rather than passionate fervor. From his tastes came wasting luxuries, and with his intellect there was associated a spirit that sometimes deserted the tree of life for the tree of knowledge, and made the reason the sophist of the senses. In executive power, his mind was not without grandeur, as shown in the internal administration of his kingdom and in his foreign treaties and commerce. View him upon the whole, and in comparison with modern names, we may recognize under the Oriental garb and temperament of the Hebrew sage the wisdom that shines out in the Essays and Aphorisms of Lord Bacon,—the magnificence that gave such peerless splendor to Leo the Tenth. In him, as with Bacon, wisdom was no safeguard from error. With him, as with Leo, magnificence was purchased sometimes at the expense of religion and humanity. The builder of the great temple, like the builder of St. Peter's, entailed

centuries of suffering and discord upon his people by his enormous imposts, and what was splendor to the eye, looking from the enchantment of distance, was a crushing burden to those groaning beneath the stately pile.

As king, he reigned with more brilliancy than beneficence, and made the frequent mistake of confounding the affluence of his treasures and the magnificence of his court with the welfare of the people and the happiness of their homes. He sinned like Louis the Fourteenth, and like him laid up woes whose harvest was to be a wretched people and a terrible revolution. Like James the First, he exaggerated the royal prerogative almost beyond endurance, and like him, too, had an infatuated son who resisted every petition for redress and broke his sceptre in trying to bind it with iron. "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke," said the foolish Rehoboam; "my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." "To your tents, O Israel," was the cry of the Hampdens and Cromwells of the northern tribes, and the national union was for ever dissolved.

A lesson is furnished by Solomon's reign, not merely to rulers inclined to be despotic, but to all states disposed to measure civilization by luxury, and to regard the accumulation of wealth as the test of prosperity. Sadly now the Old World continues in this mistake, and is in danger of renewing the oft-repeated retribution. Here we are not far advanced in the same error, but indications of its approach are not wanting. We need to follow Solomon's counsel rather than his example, and look upon the preva-

lence of knowledge, industry, frugality, and justice as of more value than enormous fortunes in the few, or passion for show and luxury in the many. We should bless our fathers for their noble course in guarding against dangerous opulence by equalizing the inheritance of children, and throwing open to all the institutions of education, which provide for general prosperity better than any agrarian law. Heaven save the civilization of this magnificent nineteenth century from the fate of Israel under the stateliest of her kings!

Above the man and the king stands the moralist, lofty in a wisdom that well justifies the idea of a peculiar inspiration. We speak especially of the characteristics displayed in the Book of Proverbs, of which he was the chief author without doubt. The Song of Songs is sometimes called the work of his youth in its impassioned fervor; the Proverbs, the production of his maturity in its ripe wisdom; and the Words of the Preacher, Ecclesiastes, that of his old age in its melancholy experience and grave moralizing. We select the production of his maturity as proof of his wonderful sagacity. The questions connected with Canticles and Ecclesiastes, we have not space to treat.

What a book it is, that of the Proverbs! Forget that we were ever obliged to repeat them mechanically in our childhood, read them as they stand in all the breadth and richness of their meaning, with our better experience of life, and nothing short of utter astonishment and admiration will be our feeling. Such gems of wisdom in such golden settings from one who lived and died before the name of wis-

dom was known among the nations from whom the world's sages have since sprung! What shrewd perception of human character under all conditions and moods, — what comprehensive exhibition of life in its whole compass, and of Divine Providence in its moral aims and sure rewards and punishments, — what counsels to frugality, industry, moderation, prudence, benevolence, peace! What varied illustrations from man and beast, nature and art! How terse and polished the style! How condensed the thought! To think of reading the little book through in a day would be folly, although its lines may be run over in an hour. Each line is a sermon, and gives food for new reflection every time we recur to it.

Do you ask whence the power of the Proverbs, we reply, in their form and substance. Their form makes them portable and accessible. This was a great thing when books were almost unknown, and a wise saying, unless so compact as to lodge in the memory, must soon vanish from the general mind. The proverb, generally in two lines, sometimes in a single line, was fashioned like a gem, to be worn everywhere, — or rounded like a ring, to be carried without effort. Hence proverbs have ever been great agencies in the moral education of the people, and are so to this day.

In their substance the Proverbs, however, have their chief elements of power. They relate to topics that concern all men, for their central topic is human life in its great relations, its duties, trials, temptations, goods. The wise king at once brings before us a vivid picture of life among the Hebrews, and expresses truths and experiences that come home to all our hearts. It

would be well if his sayings were more familiar upon our lips, instead of the too frequent inanities taken from flashy romances and veiled in outlandish jargon. Chesterfield, indeed, has called it vulgar to quote proverbs, and perhaps some dainty lips would shrink from repeating the pithy wisdom of Solomon, that are quite adept in the fashionable cant of novels, balls, and playhouses. Although we should shun all grossness, we are not to regard homely wisdom as vulgarity, nor quit the company of sages for the dicta of fops and modists. The Hebrew sage has been followed by a noble band in his study of sententious wisdom embodied in Proverbs. Saying nothing of the golden sentences of the Grecian sages, it is well to remember that Julius Cæsar collected the best proverbs of his day in a volume for the use of his dependents, and the wits of the great Louis made dramatic exhibitions of the meaning hid in the popular adages,—that Erasmus did not think it beneath him to devote a large volume to a collection of proverbs, and Cervantes owes much of his inimitable wit to his acquaintance with this branch of literature,—that Lord Bacon and George Herbert were not so engrossed by their philosophy and poetry as to prevent them from carefully gathering and preserving the aphorisms which to them expressed worlds of wisdom. Chief of these gatherers of gems of wisdom stands Solomon, and every one of those little diamonds pointed with meaning, and radiant with light, that come to us as associated with the experience of the millions who have looked upon and handled them, may well be regarded as a memento of the Hebrew sage. More wisely than

usual has the last of the train of proverbial philosophers said of such words of wisdom : —

“ They be choice pearls flung among the rocks by the sullen waters of
Oblivion,
Which Diligence loveth to gather and hang around the neck of Memory.
They be white-winged seeds of happiness wafted from the islands of
the blest,
Which Thought carefully tendeth in the kindly garden of the heart.”

Yet let us devoutly remember that a greater than Solomon has come, — a greater in wisdom as in purity. Too much the Hebrew king limits his view to the earth, in the prudence of the creeping serpent rather than in the ethereal wisdom of the heavenly dove. As far as it goes, his morality is good, and its sanctions are well founded. We need to go farther, and look higher. He is the true Guide, who came with the sanction of Heaven to be the light of the world. How strong the contrast between the son of David and the Son of Mary, — how like in sententious wisdom, how unlike in majesty, enlargement, spirituality! The pithy and confounding answers of Christ to the Pharisees resemble whilst they surpass the wonderful sentences of the royal sage. But how different the relation of the two to nature, man, God, heaven! The prayer of the dedication of the temple of gold and cedar, sublime as it is, — how is it transcended by the words at the well of Samaria! “ Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Look from the gorgeous scene in the house of the forest of Lebanon on Zion, to the simple grandeur of that mountain assem-

bly, where the Divine Preacher spoke the Beatitudes. Not from an ivory throne on golden pavement, beneath a roof of carved cedar, and surrounded by admiring courtiers, but on the hill-top, — the green sod beneath, the skies above, and the unhonored band of peasant disciples around, — the Divine Preacher discoursed of the Heavenly Father, the worth of a loving spirit, the reality of the eternal life, the benignity of Divine Providence. He himself could not but think of the contrast, not reminded of it by any palace seen afar, or any robes of Tyrian dye in the assembly. “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, not even Solomon, in all his glory, was arrayed like one of these.”

Holy Teacher of a divine faith and Giver of an immortal hope, thou greater than Solomon, we need thy heavenly ray, or wisdom becomes folly, and knowledge dispels the illusions of ignorance, and brings no joy like the charm that has gone. Sadly have the learned of our own day, who have severed science from faith, had reason to repeat the Hebrew lament:—

“For in much wisdom is much grief:

And he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.”

Melancholy indeed is much of the noted wisdom of this century and the last. What darkness in the boasted light that beams from maxims like Rochefoucauld's, and theories like D'Holbach's! What desolation in many of the noted oracles of our time! — the serpent hiss of Mephistopheles' whisper, not the still, small voice of the Eternal Word. O, let the Greater than Solomon be our interpreter of life, nature, man, God, and light eternal beams upon all things, and the

Proverbs of the sage, thus irradiated, consummated, like the Psalms of the bard, breathe a divine spirit, and are filled as with living water. In the Proverb as in the Psalm we recognize a presence of the Eternal Word, greater even than their authors' thought, since for us the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

VII.

ISAIAH AND THE PROPHETS.

WE close, in this essay, our survey of the representative men among the ancient Hebrews. Our aim has been to portray the leading character in each class of the Hebrew fathers. Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Saul, David, Solomon, the patriarch, lawgiver, priest, king, poet, sage, have passed before us in brief review. We add, now, one name more, — the chief of a renowned and mighty class, — the man first among the prophets in the Scriptural canon, first, too, in elevation of soul, range of vision, extent of influence. Last, not least, Isaiah now claims our attention. Man of the future as he eminently was, he should be regarded with new interest, as opening ages reveal things to come.

Yet there is a great difficulty in the way of treating this subject duly. There is little of personal adventure, nay, little of personal history, in the record of his career. He seems more like a voice than a personage, a spirit without embodiment, like the bird unseen in the upper air, enchanting the earth below with melody.

“Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,

Like a cloud of fire ;
The deep blue thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest."

We deal now, therefore, with no romantic adventurer, no stories of life amid the perils of the camp or the pageants of the court. Isaiah was the voice of God to his own age, and to his age the interpreter of futurity. The first point, then, needed to be considered, in order to the right understanding of his mission, is the state of the nation in his time.

From the age of Solomon to that of Isaiah, the interval is great, but greater far when measured by the revolution and wreck of the empire than by the lapse of more than two centuries. Upon the death of Solomon the kingdom had been divided, and the ten tribes of Israel had separated themselves from the two tribes of Judah, from the city, altar, and throne of David. The burden of the Hebrew annals becomes now the record of the fortunes of these rival powers. With the temple, the tombs of kings, and peculiar associations with the golden age of the theocracy, the little kingdom of Judah inherited most of the ancient enthusiasm for the Law. Her priesthood, although far from being spotless, were most faithful to their calling, less prone to idolatry, whilst, so far as the Scriptures indicate, to her sons, with but a single exception, the sacred fire of prophecy alone was given. By the prophets, Judah gained a sway over mankind beyond all that she lost by the revolt of the ten tribes under the infatuated son of Solomon.

The great prophets were trained up in dark times, and their words of hope are as nightingale notes. The glory of the empire had been broken. In Israel the

rites of Baal and Astarte not seldom were celebrated on hills of old consecrated to Jehovah. Nor was Judah exempt from shame and harm. Jehoram was not much better than Ahab, and Athaliah, the queen usurper, with a passion for intrigue and bloodshed like the infamous Catherine de Medicis, rivalled in wickedness Jezebel, the wife of Ahab and daughter of the idolatrous Sidonian. The empire, thus severed and corrupted, became a tempting prize to the surrounding nations, so long kept at bay by the arms of David and the policy of Solomon. Assyria, Syria, and Egypt lead the host of enemies, whilst Philistia, Edom, Moab, follow in their train.

Such was the age in which the prophet, so fitly styled evangelical, was called to his work. In some respects a period of decay, it was in other respects a forming period. During the prophet's life, the great empire of Babylon was founded upon the wreck of the Assyrian; Rome, too, then had her beginning, whilst Carthage and Macedon, the nations of Hannibal and Alexander, were not a century old. The date of the prophet's call is the last year of Uzziah's reign, the year 759 B. C.

What was the nature of his call, the source of his inspiration, is obvious at once, if we apply the simplest principles of interpretation to his own statement of the event. He had a vision in his early years, when not more than twenty years old,—one of those day-dreams which so often decide a man's destiny. He realized as never before the providence of God in the fortunes of the chosen nation. Jehovah appeared to him, attended by the hallowed images connected with the temple worship. The seraphim, whose sculptured

forms in the holy of holies guarded the ark and the Law, stood before him as living creatures, and called one to another : —

- “ Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts ;
The whole earth is full of his glory.”

Overwhelmed, abashed, the young Hebrew shrank as a man of unclean lips from the exalted presence. One of the seraphs flew to him, and touched his lips with a glowing coal from the altar, and that touch kindled the sacred fire that has burned from that day to this, a beacon of hope. The prophet was now ready to speak, as he was moved, — to be the voice of Divine Providence to his nation. Then he said, “ Behold, here am I ; send me ! ”

Henceforth he is completely identified with the fortunes of the nation, and he lives, not in himself, but in them. He embodies the nation's conscience and its hope. His own home in Jerusalem is not known to us at all but by its connection with national vicissitudes, and the names of his sons are taken, not, as usual, from ancestral associations or household affections, but from incidents in the national destiny.

I shall not attempt to gather materials for a detailed account of Isaiah from scattered particulars of sacred history, obscure hints in his writings, much less from uncertain tradition. His life was in his country, or rather for Jehovah in his chosen people. In connection with the Hebrew people, then, let us view him.

The first portion of his prophetic career was comparatively free from those striking events which most effectually inspired him. The sixteen years of the

reign of Jotham were not remarkable. The king was generally faithful to the temple and the throne,—anxious, however, far more to strengthen the kingdom by fortresses against invasion, than to guard it by strict virtue and piety against internal corruption. The prophet, however, was no idle observer of the course of events abroad, or of morals at home. The splendid tragedy of Sardanapalus, the Assyrian, and the division of the empire, he well knew. He watched also the growth of that corruption in Judah and Israel, that was to be as fatal to them as the arms of Arbaces and Belesis to Assyria. Words like these, whenever spoken, may fitly characterize the prophet's mind at this more quiet period : * —

“ Woe unto them that join house to house,
That lay field to field,
Till there be no place,
That they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth !

“ Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may
follow strong drink ;
That continue until night, till wine inflame them !
And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe,
And wine, are in their feasts :
But they regard not the work of the Lord,
Neither consider the operation of his hands.

“ Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no
knowledge :
And their honorable men are famished,
And their multitude dried up with thirst.
Therefore Hell hath enlarged herself,
And opened her mouth without measure :

* In the passages quoted from Isaiah, I generally should prefer to follow the amended version of Dr. Noyes, which seems to me to embody the results of the best modern scholarship. I am content, however, to call attention to its merits, that the reader may compare the passages quoted from the English Bible with the same in Dr. Noyes's version.

And their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp,
And he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it."

Isaiah v. 8, 11-14.

"I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ;
And I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.

Wash you, make you clean ;
Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ;
Cease to do evil ; learn to do well ;
Seek judgment ; relieve the oppressed,
Judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Isaiah i. 11, 16, 17.

The next period of the prophet's career was far more eventful, — too sadly so. What gave him inspiration gave him little delight, save in that great Messianic hope which he was sent to cherish. The reign of Ahaz continued sixteen years, and was as marked a period in the history of the nation as in the mission of the prophet. Ahaz has but a single rival in his title to the bad eminence of being the worst king on the throne of Judah. He deserted the altar of Jehovah for the worship of Baal, Astarte, and Moloch. War let loose its horrors upon him in retribution, and the proud king of Judah was forced to seek, by humble tribute, the alliance of Assyria against Syria and Samaria, who had combined their forces against Jerusalem. The prophet intrepidly condemned the humbling alliance with the idolater, and bade the king be strong, by trusting in the nation's God, and its sacred law : —

"Take heed, and be quiet ;
Fear not, neither be faint-hearted
For the two tails of these smoking firebrands,
For the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah."

Isaiah vii. 4.

The prophet announces the storm that is gathering

over Samaria, the land of the revolted tribes of Israel, now thirsting for the blood of their brethren of Judah. The captivity of the ten tribes is at hand; the prophet speaks of its approach as a retribution from a just God, and yet looks forward to a day of glorious return even for infatuated Israel.

"Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim,
Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower,
Which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome
with wine!

Behold! the Lord hath a mighty and strong one,
Which, as a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm
As a flood of mighty waters overflowing,
Shall cast down to the earth with the hand.
The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim,
Shall be trodden under feet." — Isaiah xxviii. 1-3.

Yet, through all the dark season of the reign of Ahaz, the prophet never loses his hope. He expresses an exalted confidence in a brighter future even than that realized under the next prince, Hezekiah.

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light:
They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath
the light shined.

Thou hast multiplied the nation,
And not increased the joy:
They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest,
And as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

"For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given:
And the government shall be upon his shoulder:
And his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God,
The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

* The common version of these three lines needs a word of comment. Dr. Noyes, instead of the phrase "Mighty God," gives the translation "Mighty Potentate." De Wette, who is wholly free from any sectarian

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,
Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom ;
To order it, and to establish it,
With judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever :
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." — Isaiah ix. 2, 3, 6, 7.

Now comes the more auspicious time, — the reign of the good King Hezekiah, who strove to restore to Judah its palmy days. His work of moral and religious reform I need not describe. The great event of his reign of twenty years I will state, from its important connection with the prophet. The king determined to throw off the humiliating subordination of the nation to Assyria. The refusal of the usual tribute-money brought Sennacherib in wrath, with a vast army, towards Jerusalem. The king for a season purchases their forbearance by rich gifts, but at last, mainly at the prophet's urgency, he trusts in the might of Jehovah to save the nation from ruin. Indignantly repelling the idea of trusting for safety in an alliance with Egypt, the prophet denounces vengeance on the invader, and then portrays the doom impending : —

" Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts,
O my people that dwellest in Zion ! be not afraid of the Assyrian :
He shall smite thee with a rod,
And shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.
For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease,
And mine anger, in their destruction." — Isaiah x. 24, 25.

bias, agrees substantially with the version given by Dr. Noyes, and his translation reads " Mighty Hero." We have no imperative objection to the common version, on purely theological grounds, for the belief of all Christians who, like ourselves, regard the Messiah as the manifestation of God, admits the use of all such epithets as are of the class of " Emmanuel " or " God with us."

The destruction of the host of Sennacherib, probably by the Simoom, is thus described : —

“ Woe to the multitude of many people,
Which make a noise like the noise of the seas ;
And to the rushing of nations,
That make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters !
The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters :
But God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off,
And shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind,
And like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.
And, behold ! at eveningtide trouble ;
And before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that
 spoil us,
This is the portion of them that spoil us,
And the lot of them that rob us.” — Isaiah xvii. 12–14.

Yet denunciations of the enemy such as these are followed by sentiments of the noblest humanity, and the most terrible of the national foes are embraced within the blessings of the glorious age to come : —

“ In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria,
And the Assyrian shall come into Egypt,
And the Egyptian into Assyria,
And the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians.
In that day shall Israel be the third
With Egypt and with Assyria,
Even a blessing in the midst of the land : whom the Lord of hosts
 shall bless, saying,
Blessed be Egypt my people,
And Assyria the work of my hands,
And Israel mine inheritance ! ” — Isaiah xix. 23–25.

In such a spirit the prophet spoke of the course of events, and threw the light of hope upon the darkest passages in the nation's history.

Of the date of his death we are not sure. That he lived to a good old age, or at least until eighty years,

cannot be reasonably doubted. Whether we regard him as finishing his course in the reign of the good King Hezekiah, as many recent critics believe, or as prolonging his days some time into the reign of the impious Manasseh and falling a victim to his wrath, we are to regard him as aware of the great catastrophe at hand for his country, and as cherishing an indomitable hope of a brighter day than ever yet had broken upon Jerusalem. In thoughts akin to these, the great prophet uttered his divine song:—

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them;
And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.
It shall blossom abundantly,
And rejoice even with joy and singing:
The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it,
The excellency of Carmel and Sharon;
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
And the excellency of our God.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then shall the lame man leap as an hart,
And the tongue of the dumb sing.
For in the wilderness shall waters break out,
And streams in the desert.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
And come to Zion with songs,
And everlasting joy upon their heads:
They shall obtain joy and gladness,
And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Isaiah xxxv. 1, 2, 5, 6, 10.

In want of materials for a more minute personal history of Isaiah, we have quoted freely from his prophecies, that his own voice might speak for itself. We now proceed to consider more particularly his character, mission, and influence; or the man, the prophet, the lesson.

The man stands revealed in his works. Simplicity, elegance, sublimity, unite to place him chief among the Hebrew prophets, although perhaps in detached passages of their writings Ezekiel, Joel, and Habakkuk equal him in grandeur. He had that characteristic of exalted genius, the power of investing common objects with dignity, and employing the homeliest imagery to convey the most exalted ideas. The garden, the stable, the vineyard, the wine-press, the axe, the spade, the ploughshare, the pruning-hook, afford illustrations of his prophecy, quite as exalted in their significance as the sword and spear, the war-chariot, the river, forest, and mountain. His power of vision is remarkable. Every topic seems to present itself objectively, as if before the eyes, and we can hardly read his graphic portraiture of the characters and destinies of the men and nations of his time without starting, as if a procession of apparitions were passing before us. Even the unseen world takes visible shape, and the shadows of the dead rise to view, as in that thrilling passage on the doom of Babylon the great:—

“Hell from beneath is moved for thee
To meet thee at thy coming :
It stirreth up the dead for thee,
Even all the chief ones of the earth ;
It hath raised up from their thrones
All the kings of the nations.
All they shall speak and say unto thee,
Art thou also become weak as we ?
Art thou become like unto us ?
Thy pomp is brought down to the grave,
And the noise of thy viols :
The worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.
How art thou fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning !

How art thou cut down to the ground,
Which didst weaken the nations!" — Isaiah xiv. 9-12.

When we consider that the man who had this faculty of vision was also an historian and a political counsellor, we cannot deny him a place among the exalted intellects of our kind.

His intellect, however, worked ever at the bidding of his moral and spiritual affections. No poetic enthusiasm ever entices him for a moment from his habitual seriousness of aim. What to a fancy like David's would suggest emotions of lyrical joy, moves Isaiah to the most earnest contemplation. To him the blossom wears a serious expression, and Siloa's sparkling fountain has a momentous whisper. Devout, humane, hopeful, he is perhaps more remarkable for strict conscientiousness, jealous regard for the right, than for any other moral attribute. His is a conscience inspired by devout hope. This was the basis of his character, and around this and upon it all gentle graces gather, as soil and vines and flowers upon the rock. His sense of right startles us in his terrific forebodings of judgment, and melts us in his pathetic anticipations of the better days coming. His golden age is no time of luxury or merely external prosperity. Righteousness must come before peace and joy.

"Behold! a king shall reign in righteousness,
And princes shall rule in judgment.
And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind,
And a covert from the tempest;
As rivers of water in a dry place,
As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

The vile person shall be no more called liberal,
Nor the churl said to be bountiful." — Isaiah xxxii. 1, 2, 5;

How vast is the compass of his affections, yet always true to the right! In the awful sublimity of his denunciation of Babylon, and in the pathos of his description of the age of peace, the same characteristics appear. What range of imagery, what mastery of the springs of emotion! Now the vision of the underworld with its terrors, — now the images of peace and joy, — the wolf and the leopard lying down with the kid, the lion led by a little child. From a great heart such thoughts had their beginning, — a great heart, too, that expressed itself not merely in words, but also in deeds. He was the leading religious teacher of his country in his own age, unterrified by the threats of enemies, unseduced by the favors of friends. At home and abroad, in the palace, in the temple, among the people, in the courts and camps of surrounding nations, the force of his great soul was felt. He was independent without being self-willed, bold without being rash, uncompromising without austerity, a reformer without being a destructive, a brave censor of the sins of kings and priests without being in the least hostile to the foundations of government or religion. Although not equalling the older Hebrew patriots in acts of courage, below Moses and Elijah in proofs of heroic daring, he was the true hero of his age, the man of power in Judah for at least a half-century.

Thus much of the man, — what of the prophet? The prophet is described by the office which he fills, and his mode of filling it. The prophetic office, how are we to regard this? Very differently from the prevalent idea. We are usually taught to regard the name *prophet* as applied to one whose sole office is

to foretell future events. But to predict the future, although surely one part, was the least part of the calling of the Hebrew seer. In its simplest sense, the word translated] *prophet* indicates one who speaks as he is moved from within as from a gushing fountain. The prophet was the inspired oracle, the man who spoke as from an inward fulness divinely given. He was not the priest busied with a set ritual, nor the scribe copying the letter of a code, nor the magistrate concerned with civil administration. The language already quoted well describes the prophet's state of mind: "Here I am : send me!" The voice of God to the nation it was the prophet's mission to be. This mission comes from the very nature of things, for in all ages men have spoken from an inward and divine fulness; but in the chosen nation, the prophetic gift had peculiar incentives and regulations. The office was recognized by Moses, who in his own person bore its honors and spoke words of prophetic exaltation, as well as set forth a specific law. Like the rock which he smote with the rod, within the adamantine energies of his character dwelt a living spring, a fountain of refreshing and life. From the days of Samuel, means were taken to encourage the noble youth of the land to a high state of spiritual life, and the sacred fire was kindled by the music, lessons, and services of the schools of the prophets. Yet in Judah, as everywhere in the world, gifted genius did not always wait for a regular scholastic training. "I was an herdsman and the Lord took me," — might be said of many inspired souls as well as of the prophet Amos.

Speaking from an inner fulness, the prophet was the great moralist of the nation; no harsh radical,

bent on destroying established institutions, but seeking to secure the purity of the ancient law and apply it with new power to current affairs, — friendly to the civil power and the priesthood, yet a check on both, — guarding the one from tyranny and the other from formalism and superstition, determined to keep the throne and altar true to Jehovah, the God and the Guardian of Israel. The prophet's relation to futurity was not so much concerned with specific predictions of coming events, as with cherishing that great Messianic hope, which seems to have been born among the roses of Eden, to have been nourished by Abraham, confirmed by Moses, enlarged by the noblest minds of the race as successes widened their horizon and trials exalted their faith by humbling their pride, and exhibited in its sublime fulness by him whom Jerome, the most learned of the Christian fathers, has called not so much a prophet as a fifth evangelist.

Such was the prophetic office. It was Isaiah's work to fill it at a time when the nation needed at once the light of divine counsel and the encouragement of divine hope. His prophecies are evidently fervid utterances of his mind in the usual form of the Hebrew poetical composition, and abound in parallelisms like the Psalms. There is much of similarity in the general structure of his oracles, widely different as they are in subject and imagery. He usually begins by stating the occasion that moved him to speak, describes the sins and dangers of the city or nation whose errors he arraigns, then states the consequences of such transgressions, and closes almost invariably with holding up to view the bright future, which obedience will

ever bring, and which in the good providence of God will come at last. Thus he is at once the historian and moralist of his own age, as well as the seer of futurity.

But how far does he see into futurity, is a question alike interesting and important. Does he beyond doubt show an acquaintance with future events that may justly be called supernatural? We have a reply sufficiently direct, although it will not satisfy the extremes of either class of interpreters, the extreme naturalists or supernaturalists. We cannot deny that a credulous and exaggerated love of marvels has led a prevalent school of interpreters to find miracles in every page of Isaiah, and to exalt the most obvious references to his own time into predictions of a distant future, and to distort poetical imagery into mystical oracles. The too prevalent school of readers look upon the book of Isaiah without any just regard to his relation to his own age, taking it for granted that his mission was not so much to comfort his own people in an age of peril and despondency, as to utter dark sayings that Christianity alone should interpret. We earnestly regard Isaiah as especially illuminated, as a providential interpreter of futurity. But to us his claim to such dignity is more satisfactorily established by considering the great ideas which he was commissioned to teach, than by resting the whole argument upon the exact fulfilment of specific predictions. Moved by a great providential hope, he spoke the voice of God to his age and the ages. Wonderfully were his anticipations fulfilled by Him of David's line, whose coming he proclaimed, — wonderfully in substance, although by no means with exactness in the literal

expression. From Jerusalem the Messiah was to go forth and subdue the nations into a kingdom of equity and mercy; but the nature and form of the Christian kingdom never present themselves save in general intimations in the oracles of the great seer. How could it be otherwise? How could Isaiah *fully* portray Christ without being Christ? How could he announce the Gospel in its fulness without having the Gospel, and thus hurrying on the great consummation before the fulness of time?

We surely regard Isaiah as a man of open vision, who saw, not only the extent, but far into the depths of the Messianic kingdom. He is pervaded by a conviction of the grandeur of the Messiah in suffering, of the craving for divine grace in the human soul, and the promise of God to send the true Comforter in the fulness of time. He has more of the interior life in his predictions than any of the great fellowship to which he belongs. Adopting the exalted language which the Gospel applies to God's revealing power, the Word, we regard Isaiah as more than any of the Old Testament writers illuminated by the Word that was subsequently made flesh in Jesus Christ, and as exercising in interior vision the office which John the Baptist exercised in respect to moral strictness among those who beheld by anticipation the glory of the Messiah as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Lay aside all questions of criticism as to dates of prophecy or ages of composers; stop not even to dispute upon the much controverted theory whether chapters xl. to lxvi. are by Isaiah himself, or by a younger Isaiah, who wrote after the Babylonish cap-

tivity, in the spirit of his great predecessor: take unquestioned facts, and let the soul of the prophet speak its own grandeur and inspiration. What a heart was in him who in a barbarous age, when war was deemed so glorious, and had not been rebuked even by the equivocal voice of Grecian and Roman philosophy, could cherish an anticipation like this:—

“For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
And he shall judge among the nations,
And shall rebuke many people:
And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
And their spears into pruning-hooks:
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more.” — Isaiah ii. 3, 4.

Hopes like these in the progress of humanity may well lead us to look to him for ideas concerning God and man and the Divine government far in advance of prevalent views. In the awful majesty of the old dispensation indeed, yet with tenderness and mercy tempering his judgments, the Jehovah that irradiated his visions beams with the love that is the very being of the Heavenly Father manifested in Christ. For man he grieved and always hoped, and his mingled grief and hope give his view of human nature in its degradation and capacity of good. But his great theme was the triumph and glory of the Divine kingdom. The Messianic hope pervades all his oracles, and shines out in all his dealings with men and nations. The kingdom of God was to come. From Judah its august leader was to be raised up, but all people were to be comprehended at last in its blessings. In words surely thrilling with his spirit, even if, as some scholars maintain, sometimes transmitted by

a later hand, the suffering and at last the triumph of the Messiah are announced ; with Christian profoundness the holy virtue and peace of sorrow are portrayed, whilst with the Hebrew fire the great triumph is proclaimed. What range of feeling herein : —

“ Who hath believed our report ?
And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?

All we, like sheep, have gone astray ;
We have turned every one to his own way ;
And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
Yet he opened not his mouth :
He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
So he openeth not his mouth.” — Isaiah liii. 1, 6, 7.

What jubilee in the words that follow : —

“ Arise ! shine ! for thy light is come,
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light,
And kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

Violence shall no more be heard in thy land,
Wasting nor destruction within thy borders ;
But thou shalt call thy walls Salvation,
And thy gates Praise.

The sun shall be no more thy light by day ;
Neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee :
But the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light,
And thy God thy glory.” — Isaiah lx. 1, 3, 18, 19.

Such was the prophet, teacher of duty, oracle of hope. The lesson of his life and mission is the spirit of the man. Powerfully indeed has its influence been felt. It cheered the fainting hearts of his own people in their sad years of captivity ; it cherished in many

yearning minds the germs of spiritual faith, and prepared the way for Him heralded by the preacher of the wilderness, who in the language of Isaiah called on the people to prepare the way of the Lord. It was a passage of the evangelical prophet that our Saviour read in his first recorded visit to the synagogue, after the commencement of his ministry. The language of Isaiah lent itself readily to the Christian disciples in illustration of their Master's humiliation and triumph. Those inspired strains have been the music of hope in all ages since.

How powerful is hope, how mighty in educating an individual or a nation! The Jews owed all their greatness to their enthusiastic hope. Their golden age was not the past, but in the future. Their error was in misinterpreting the ground of confidence, and rejecting Him who came to be their salvation. Yet that exalted hope did not die, but was rather quickened and enlarged as the husk in which it was wrapped fell off and perished. It still remains in the world, and still kindles noble confidence in hearts and homes and nations. Who of us does not cherish a hope beyond aught we have ever realized, — a hope for ourselves, for all humanity. The sacred torch so brightly burning in the hand of the evangelical prophet has not fallen to the ground, but has been passed from hand to hand, and to all noble visions never flamed up so brightly as now. Blessed are they who in all ages enliven its flame, — the comforters of humanity, — the orators, preachers, statesmen, bards, sages, who breathe the spirit of encouragement whilst they urge the sacredness of duty and assert the inviolableness of right. Who can name them all or

half, — who portray those goodly sons of the morning, at whose head stands the noble Isaiah ?

Honor to them who educate the nations by exalting and brightening their hope ! They have ever been the wisest teachers. Enough of the good in which they have trusted has been realized, to warrant us to hope and strive for the rest. Shrink not from the teachers who combine conscience with confidence, and hold up the everlasting right as the security of the everlasting good. Brighter, brighter burn the torch fed by the prophet minds of ages ! Higher, higher be it lifted, till the benighted corners of the earth and dark dens of the nations glory in its radiance and walk in its light. Let Christendom still glow with the trust of Judah, and the hopes of the chosen nation be consummated in the hopes of humanity, — the triumph of the kingdom of God. Earth heaves with portentous throes, old things are passing away. Not in forebodings altogether gloomy let us contemplate the future. Let Christian faith repeat the prophet's trust : —

“ For, behold ! I create new heavens and a new earth.
 For behold ! I create Jerusalem a rejoicing,
 And her people a joy.
 And the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her,
 Nor the voice of crying.
 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them ;
 And they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.
 They shall not labor in vain,
 Nor bring forth for trouble.
 Before they call I will answer ;
 And while they are yet speaking I will hear.”

Isaiah lxy. 17 - 24.

“ The time cometh to gather all nations and tongues together ;
 They shall come and behold my glory.” — Isaiah lxvi. 18.

Let us hope devoutly for our race here in the world and our souls in the realm eternal.

Farewell now to the Hebrew fathers, as we close this hasty survey of their chiefs. Truly the goodly fellowship of the prophets praise God. Our joy confirms their hope. Let our hearts join in the honor paid to their names by one no stranger to their mind : —

“ My inmost soul your sainted spirit greets,
Ye true and faithful messengers of God !
Take now, amidst your palmy groves, that rest,
Which Horeb, Zion, Carmel, never gave.

“ Again I greet you with exulting voice,
Ye guileless souls, that in the hands of God
Like harps responded and expressed his will,
Revealed the future and his laws enforced.” *

* Herder's Spirit of Hebrew Poetry.

VIII.

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE PRECURSORS OF THE MESSIAH.

“PREPARE ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Thus, after an interval of more than four centuries, the last of the prophets finds an echo in the first of the Evangelists, and the New Testament begins as the Old ends. Of that interval let us now speak. The topic is surely a fitting continuation of our general subject, and very properly introduces us to the leading characters of the New Testament, or Christianity in its choice exemplars. More distinctly stated, our subject is the providential preparation for the coming of the Messiah after the close of the Hebrew Scriptures. Malachi is the last of the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and in words caught from Isaiah and repeated by John the Baptist, he hails the Messiah’s coming and all that prepares the way.

“Behold! I will send my messenger,
And he shall prepare the way before me.”

I. Consider first the meaning of these words from the prophet’s own point of view. He wrote at a time not far distant from the year 420 before Christ, — a time when Socrates was enlightening the Greeks by his moral wisdom, and Rome was advancing towards

her republican greatness by the elevation of her common people. He had surely heard enough and seen enough of the dealings of God with his nation to enable him to justify his anticipations of the future by the sober calculations of the past, when he wrote of the messenger who should prepare the way of the Lord.

The worst disasters of the chosen race had but seemed to carry out more effectually the purposes of their mission. In captivity, by the rivers of Babylon weeping over their lost and ruined Zion, they felt and exercised an influence denied them in the palmy period of their national prosperity; denied them when Saul led their hosts, or David presided over their worship, or Solomon taught them wisdom. In exile, the Jews loved their country as never before, and the enchantment lent by distance combined with remorse for former disobedience and disgust at the surrounding idolatry to fix their faith firmly in the One God of their fathers. They acted powerfully upon their captors, and in matters of religion gave law to their masters. The creed of Zoroaster and the edicts of Cyrus prove well that the people raised up to have in charge the doctrine of the One God had not visited Babylon and Persia in vain.

The restoration had come,—the temple had been rebuilt, the worship reorganized, the sacred code revised and presented to the people. A century had passed now since the return, and the last of the Hebrew prophets lifts up his voice. What is his tone? Is he satisfied with the state of things around him? Does he feel that the great consummation has taken place, and the Divine plans have had their fulfilment?

He looked earnestly forward, and trusted in one who should come to prepare the way. New privileges and new troubles turned his mind anxiously towards the future. The people had received a new intellectual stimulus, and the discussions of the synagogue were now added to the devotions of the temple. Opportunity for mental enlargement was attended with exposure to moral laxity, and friendly relations with Persia connected Judea with the feuds and the friendships of surrounding states. Mindful of these circumstances, the prophet in the name of God addresses his parting counsels to the nation. Mingling rebuke with promise and warning with encouragement, he declares the certainty of judgment against the transgressor, proclaims the final rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings, and that the way will be providentially prepared.

We look now through that interval of four centuries, for indications of that preparation. We must be content with two prominent points of view. In order that the way might be prepared for the establishment of true religion in the world, it was necessary that the institutions devoted to the worship of the One God should not be overthrown by an idolatrous power, and that the essential ideas of these institutions should not be narrowed and nullified by formalism and bigotry. Thus there would be needed champions of the Hebrew nationality and renovators of Hebrew piety. There must be call for the arm of the strong and the mind of the wise, — the one defending the Mosaic system against the invader, the other guarding it against the bigot, — the one securing stability, the other giving expansion. From time to

time such men arose. Of two orders of them only we must be content to speak.

II. For nearly a century after Malachi, the Jews under the mild protection of Persia lived quietly within their native valleys, apparently unconscious of the rising glories of Grecian arts and arms and the growing ambition of their Persian monarchs. When Greece and Persia met in battle, and Greece conquered, Judea entered a new age of her destiny, and under Alexander's sway the Jew began with the Greek that relation that has never ceased, and which has changed the face of human civilization. Nobly the Jewish pontiff bore himself before the Macedonian king, and conquered him in the power of faith and the might of peace. Clad in his robes of state, the priests in ceremonial attire, the people in white garments, Jaddua went out to meet Alexander. No sooner, says an historian, did the king behold the high-priest in his hyacinthine robes, embroidered with gold, and with the turban and its golden frontal, than he fell prostrate and adored the holy name which was there inscribed in golden characters, at once disappointing the hordes eager for slaughter and pillage, and the fears of the suppliant Jews, as he said, "I worship not the high-priest, but his God." But when Alexander's kingdom, after his death, was divided among his generals, Judea became the arena of fierce strifes among rival pretenders, ruled over now by the Syrian and now by the Egyptian king. The Syrian at last gained the mastery, and when Antiochus Epiphanes came to the throne, the darkest day came upon the race of Moses. This Antiochus is the most horrible image that has ever stamped

itself upon Jewish literature, and language seems inadequate to describe his abominations. Voluptuous, cruel, wily, tyrannical, he combined within himself the worst elements of the Greek and the Asiatic. He strove to corrupt the principles of the Jews by enticing pleasures, and to drive them from their faith by his vengeance. Did he succeed? Was the Old Hebrew fire dead, or only slumbering? Was the blood of Moses and Joshua, Saul and David, all exhausted?

Antiochus went too far for his own schemes. He plotted the ruin of the whole Hebrew race, and let loose against them his savage soldiery upon the peaceful Sabbath, when the people were intent upon the offices of religion. He defiled the altars of the temple, substituted idolatrous rites in the place of divine worship, dedicated it to the Olympian Jupiter, and doomed to death all who adhered to the ancient faith. Surely a great crisis was at hand, not merely for Judea, but for man. Was Grecian polytheism, with all its corrupt manners and morals, to trample down the pure theism of the Hebrew code, and blot out its simple creed and sublime morals? The answer came from a quarter before little known in the nation's annals.

In a town upon the border of the Mediterranean lived an old man who had five sons in the vigor of their years. The aged Mattathias was of the priestly line, and had great influence in Modin, and of course was among the first whom the minions of Antiochus sought to bring over to their master's will. The old man was made of sterner stuff than to throw the laws of Moses under the feet of the idolater. He struck down with his own hand the first apostate Jew

who went forward to offer sacrifice to the heathen deity, put to death the king's commissioner, and called on all true sons of their fathers to follow him to the mountains and set up the standard of Israel in the high places. A spark only was needed to kindle a general fire. A powerful national party forthwith arose, and under the command of Judas Maccabæus, the third son of Mattathias, revived the ancient glories of Israel. The victories of Beth-horon, Emmaus, Gilead, Idumea, repeated the heroism of Modin, and when the great Maccabee fell, Antiochus had already fallen in dishonor and loathsome disease into the grave, and the Roman Senate (all unconscious of the power that Judea was to impart to Rome) confirmed the independence of the nation.

That was a great day for the Jew when Judas Maccabæus with his confederates entered in triumph the waste places of Jerusalem. They found tall shrubs, resembling the undergrowth of a forest, in the courts of the temple. Marks of profanation appeared in every part of the edifice, and the chambers of the priests had been thrown down. The whole host cast ashes upon their head as they saw the desolation of the holy place. With wild cries of sorrow and the notes of their war-trumpets, they lifted their voices to the God of Abraham and Moses, in prayer and praise. The work of restoration was immediately begun, and soon the Feast of Dedication was celebrated, and ever afterwards kept sacred by the nation. It was the jubilee of the regeneration of the people, the reinauguration of that constitution which was at once their political safeguard and their religious law.

For over a century the family of the Maccabees

ruled the nation, and are called in history by the name of the Asmonean princes. They continued in power until the accession of the Herods of Idumea, whose sway was so intimately connected with the rise of Christianity and the closing scenes of Jewish nationality. Who will not say that the Maccabees, in guarding the Mosaic system against pagan idolatries, were mighty instruments in preparing the way for Him who should give that system its predicted fulfilment, and establish the spiritual kingdom of which Jerusalem was but the promise and emblem?

III. Theirs was the strong arm of power, united, indeed, in the greatest of their line, with the mind of wisdom and the heart of piety. Yet they were too much occupied with the affairs of the state and the ritual of the temple to do all that was needed for the expansion of the Jewish mind. They made the Jewish nationality more intense, — an influence was needed to give it more enlargement. Such an influence in due time came. A class of spiritualists arose who alike by their morals and their philosophy prepared for the coming of Him who was to trace all morality to its source in the Divine love, and all wisdom to its fountain in the eternal light.

There is some difficulty in giving exact definitions and dates to the spiritual party. Yet there are unquestionable proofs of its existence and power. The Apocryphal books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, the one with its philosophical expansiveness, and the other with its almost Christian tenderness, are tokens of the new spirit at work in the Jewish mind.

Whence came this tendency, do we ask? How could it but appear as an offset to the exclusiveness

that was becoming so prominent in the national party? It was nurtured by the pure principles of the ancient Mosaic code, confirmed by the loftiest strains of poetic and prophetic inspiration, and aided by communion with the best thoughts of the Grecian sages. It appears in the precious sayings of the son of Sirach, and shines out in the pages of Philo. If a single name is to bear the palm, it should be given to the family of Sirach, who for three generations gave their zeal to collecting and preserving the most enlarged and spiritual sentiments of their time. To the Sirachides in the realm of thought belongs the ascendancy due the Maccabees in the sphere of action. The ultra Protestant churches have been less wise than Rome and England, in shutting out such wisdom as that of the Book of Ecclesiasticus from the minds of their people. What sagacity in the survey of life,—what tenderness in view of injuries,—what comprehensiveness in historical—study, what piety pervading the whole of its sententious prudence and culminating in its closing prayer!

The Book of Wisdom, called by the name of Solomon, but of unknown authorship, exhibits a higher philosophical range, and shows traces of the influence of the Greek sages upon Hebrew thought. It was undoubtedly the production of some mind educated at Alexandria, that city which brought Europe and Asia into such intimate union, and allied the faith of the East with the more exact understanding of the West. There the spirits of Moses and Plato met, and their meeting upon the basis of the Christian revelation gave Christian theology, certainly in its orthodox form, much of its shape and system. The

Book of Wisdom indicates the existence of a profound spiritual philosophy before the time of Christ, that was preparing the way for his coming and gathering influences which after his ascension were to act powerfully upon the Christian Church. Think not that, in ascribing so much force to the Alexandrian school, we are giving preëminence to philosophy over faith. It was the Hebrew faith that rather subjected the Grecian thought to itself, and enlisted the ideas of Plato in behalf of the creed of the One God, and the spiritual life. Words like these surely indicate a spirit that was preparing the way of the Messiah: "God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise, they seem to die: and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction: but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality."

The higher spiritual tendency of the Jewish mind appears to have been embodied in great part in the sect of the Essenes, the third leading sect of the nation. The Pharisees were traditionists, adding to the Mosaic Law. The Sadducees were anti-traditionists, contending for the strict letter of the old Law against all innovations. Thus the former were to Judaism what Roman Catholics are to Christendom, whilst the latter were somewhat, in a merely negative sense, like our Protestants, who reject the traditions of the fathers and rest upon the simple word of Scripture. With a host of superstitious traditions

the Pharisee connected with his creed some elevating views of the future life, which the worldly Sadducee rejected as not asserted in the letter of the Law, and while the one tended to self-righteous pietism, and the other tended to a merely secular conservatism, both united in an intolerant national exclusiveness and formalism. The Essenes differed from them both, alike in respect to exclusiveness and formalism. They insisted chiefly upon a pure and devout life, above worldly vanity and pride. They did not think the place of worship so important as the spirit. They magnified the value of retirement and meditation, and thought little of property, nay, looked with horror on the disposition to amass wealth by fraud or ambition, and chief of all condemned the rapacity that would hold property in man. They believed in immortality, not, like the Pharisees, as the result of a future miraculous resurrection, but as the soul's divine birthright, to be enjoyed immediately after death by those who had lived above the bondage of sin. They seem to have originated among the Alexandrian Jews, and to have illustrated in its moral and practical aspects the doctrine of life which the Book of Wisdom and Philo exhibit more in its philosophical aspects.

Some writers have been disposed to ascribe far too much influence to the Essenes, in the formation of the Christian religion. What was an incidental preparation, they declare to have been the creative cause. This error lurks amid the pages of the interesting volume lately from the pen of Harriet Martineau, *Eastern Life, Past and Present*. "It is impossible," she writes, "to enter philosophically in any degree

into the mind of Christ, without considering how large an element of his thought was the life and doctrine of the Essenes. When we read of them in Josephus and Philo, we see reflected back, as in a mirror, the life of the Gospel, or at least the idea of that life which was held by the early Christians. The Sermon on the Mount might be taken as one long blessing on the Essenes,— the non-resistants, the abjurers of property, the humble, the mortified, the industrious, the charitable. Their societies undoubtedly formed the model of the first Christian communities, and of subsequent monastic institutions.”

This is altogether too sweeping, and quite in this noted lady's favorite vein. To infer from the mild and spiritual views of the Essenes, that from them the Christian system virtually originated, is to take ground in defiance of obvious facts. Christianity, sympathizing, indeed, in many things with the mystic quietists of Judea, differed from them in important particulars. Not only claiming to speak with miraculous sanctions, and impart divine influences, Jesus differed widely from the Essenes also by countenancing social life, rebuking monastic seclusion, and repudiating altogether the doctrine, that contempt for the earth and the body is the measure of our love of God and heaven. His presence at the marriage of Cana is deemed by good commentators as an express rebuke of Essene austerity. Those humane mystics were in a degree the precursors, but by no means the originators, of Christianity. On the contrary, there is good reason to think that they had already begun to harden into a sect, and, like some mystical sects of later times, were in danger of running into a superstition and for-

malism of their own, quite as conspicuous in its way as that of the Pharisees. There is such a thing as being formal in our opposition to formalism, dogmatic in our protest against dogmatism, and unspiritual even in our zeal for spirituality. Little permanent good seemed destined to come from the Essenes, had not the chosen one, in the fulness of time, come in the way which they helped to prepare. The nationality vindicated by the Maccabees and the spiritualism favored by the Essenes would have been of little avail, without the mission of Him who was sent to proclaim the New Jerusalem, and pour out the spirit of truth in its fulness. The ruling powers had become very corrupt, the priests and Pharisees were trampling upon freedom of soul, in the palace of Herod and the courts of the temple darkness brooded over Israel, when the words of the prophet were repeated by a new and strange voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make his path straight."

IV. Now we stand upon the threshold of the New Testament. John the Baptist is the connecting link between the two dispensations, — as if one of the ancient prophets introducing the kingdom of the Messiah. In the language of the fourth Gospel, "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of the Light. The same came for a witness that all men through him might believe." Jesus says of him, that among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist. "Yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Although only partially illuminated, and not fully initiated into the truths of the Christian dispensation,

or kingdom of heaven, there are two important Christian principles which he announced with authoritative confidence. In the first place, he plainly declared that the Messiah and his government were not to be exclusively national, or confined to the posterity of Abraham, and, secondly, he insisted upon moral purity as the essential condition of admission to its privileges. Here, surely, were bold words for the ears of the bigots and formalists of that day: "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance. And say not, We have Abraham for our father, for God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham." "The axe lieth at the root of all the trees. Every tree, therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." The rite which he administered — baptism by water — was a fit emblem of his doctrine, the doctrine that urges repentance of sin without presuming to have at command the power that conquers sin and gives the soul reconciliation with God and entrance upon the eternal life.

Stand now with John on the banks of the Jordan, and strive to look upon the past and future from his point of view. The words announcing his mission are from the lips of the last of the old prophets, and connect with the present the ancient age. In the heart of that stern ascetic glowed all that spirit which had showed itself so powerfully in the Jewish race during that long interval. Much of the nationality

that had animated the Maccabees in their defence of the Mosaic state and temple against idolatrous invasion remained, and showed itself in that declaration of the coming of the kingdom of God; whilst the moral and spiritual elements that had appeared so signally in the Essenes lived in all their fulness in him, and prompted his preaching of repentance and good works. He represented within himself all that was best in the past, and was the consummation of the various agencies that had been sent to prepare the way.

What more was wanting? Was any thing lacking? Why not sit at the feet of the ascetic, as the promised Messiah, and say, It is enough, all the needs of our souls are satisfied? John himself was not satisfied with his own ministry; how, then, could we be satisfied? He still rested in the Law; he yearned for the Gospel; he expressed the great want; he sighed for the satisfaction of that want; he preached repentance, and predicted the coming of Him in whom faith should have its object, and repentance its motive; he laid bare the bleeding wound of humanity, and gave promise of Him who should be its great physician. The voice in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way," needed the response of the Mount that opened the predicted kingdom in its fulness, and so divinely declared its beatitudes.

Who, from something of personal want, cannot in some measure apprehend the relation of John to the Messiah? How much within the soul repeats the voice of the wilderness!—how much of want, aspiration, sense of weakness, craving for light and peace within, echoes the shrill cry, "Prepare ye the way of

the Lord!" Do not we need the ministry of one who not only predicts God, but manifests him, — who not only promises heaven, but opens it, — who not only preaches repentance and faith, but presents the truth and breathes the spirit essential to them both, and reconciling man with God?

When John and Jesus met, in them ages met together. The future confirmed the promise of the past, when the Messiah bowed his head to receive the water of baptism from the prophet. The past did homage to the future, when the ascetic, in such tender humility, yielded to the spiritual majesty of the gentle Nazarene, and cried, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Auspicious union, consecrating for ever that hallowed river! Not inaptly one of our old poets celebrates the event: —

"Old Jordan smiled, receiving such high pay
For those small pains obedient he had spent,
Making his waters guard the dried way
Through wonders when to Canaan Israel went;
Nor does he envy now Pactolus' streams,
Or eastern floods, whose paths are paved with gems."

Auspicious union indeed! Where could its like be found? It is the meeting of the old covenant with the new, and the sanction of the new by the old. It was a memorable meeting when Darius and Alexander met (B. C. 331) at Arbela, and the Oriental yielded to the European. But that of these two Hebrews on the banks of the Jordan was a more memorable, and its result must appear in a great moral victory, which shall establish a faith combining the truth of Oriental and European beliefs without their errors; not confounding nature with God, as the Oriental

pantheist, nor God with men, as the European polytheist, but recognizing God in Christ, the Divine Man, as the true revelation of the God in all and the man in God. It was a memorable meeting (B. C. 146) when Diæus and Mummius met at Corinth, and by that surrender the kingdom of Alexander yielded to that of Cæsar. But here is a more memorable, which shall subject to itself both realms, and make the language of the Greek add wings to its word, and the dominion of the Roman open highways to its thought.

We pause now in this hurried survey of the preparation for Christianity, in the interval between the Old and New Testaments. The fulness of time has come, and the great hour on the clock of Time is about to strike. Tenderly sympathizing with all the yearnings and aspirations of those who prepared the way, tolerant towards their interpretations, grateful for their labor and self-sacrifice, we look now to Him whose coming they proclaimed. Of the Messiah we will next speak. We have been walking in the twilight, that heralds the day.

IX.

THE MESSIAH IN HIS PREPARATION AND PLAN.

IN our last essay, we listened to the voice in the wilderness which for centuries had been sounding the note of preparation for a new dispensation. In John, the ascetic Baptist, we found its last and chief expression, and by him we were led to the Messiah, whose herald he was. Who is the being to whom this last of the old prophets yields such deference, and through whom the New Covenant is to take the place of the Old? Our subject thus readily presents itself. We ask, now, what had been the previous preparation of Christ for his ministry, and what was his plan? With him, who received baptism from the hands of John, the great future of mankind rested, as with no other who has ever lived. Before we contemplate that future, we of course desire to know something of the early life and master purpose of the chosen servant of God.

I. What was the preparation of our Lord for his ministry? Think not the question an irreverent one, because it implies discipline and progress in regard to a being who may be thought, from his exalted nature, to need none. Whatever view we may take of our Saviour's Divine endowments, we must nevertheless

expect them to be developed under earthly conditions, and that the Divine spirit which was imparted to him from the first in such fulness would be unfolded, like every gift of God to the soul, gradually, with the expansion of his powers and the influences of his position. Even they who regard our Saviour as the absolute God, are in the habit of tracing in his human nature the gradual development of the Divine, and might so far join with us in considering his preparation for his work.

We only desire to say at the outset, that, in speaking of the various influences that trained the mind of our Lord for his mission, we imply all along that he had, from the beginning, a peculiar and Divine Sonship, and that the various discipline through which he passed did not of course create, but simply brought out, the Divinity within him. What that Divine Sonship was, we can know only as it is developed to us. The birth of Christ, viewed as by a direct act of the Creator, leaves us none the less to learn his relation to God by his life; for all rational power originally came from God to his children by a direct creative act, and yet to know its character we study its development, and are not content merely to know its origin. Leaving then where the Scriptures leave it the descent of the Son from the Father, we would consider the various steps of the preparation that led the child of the Nazarene to go forth as the Messiah of God.

Who were his teachers, do we ask? The reply is ready. First, God's works were his teachers. In those works the Divine Word that dwelt in him, not yet fully manifested, revealed itself, for by that

Word were the heavens made and the earth, and all that in them is. Nature was one of his instructors, for nature to a true soul speaks the voice of God. There are many ways of studying nature. We may study the universe economically, or in search of useful commodities or expedients; curiously, or in search of novelties and wonders; scientifically, or in search of natural laws; poetically, or in search of beautiful figures and pleasing fancies; and all these things are well, and may help us in the grander study of nature as an expression of the wisdom and love of God. For this expression the Nazarene child looked upon the works of his Heavenly Father, and read therein the fulness of an ineffable love. It was not his mission to unfold the physical laws of the universe. He read and was to set forth its great moral law. To him even the little sparrow in its flight and fall revealed the Omnipresent love as the central principle of the moral world, centuries before the falling apple disclosed to Newton the secret of the visible heavens.

That Christ had studied the spirit of God in his works is obvious from his position and the use which he made of nature in the instruction of the people. He lived in a region in which every prominent scene was connected with impressive historical lessons, as well as with natural beauties and harmonies. The land of promise was his country. Nazareth, little honored of old among the cities of Israel, but ever interesting for the beauty of its scenery and the romance of its vicinity, was his home. The hills, fifteen in number, meet together to form the basin in which Nazareth lies, as if they were guardian angels keeping watch over a treasure not yet to be ex-

posed to the rude world. Along these hills he roamed, — of those springs gushing from the rock he drank. We will not vouch for the truth of the tradition which points out the workshop where he assisted Joseph, and the table at which he supped, and the synagogue in which he worshipped. We will not conjecture what were the emotions with which he looked upon the hallowed places of his neighborhood, as when from some hill-top he caught sight of Carmel, where Elijah prayed to the One God before that Mediterranean which it commands had floated a single Roman ship; or of Gilboa, on whose high places the beauty of Israel had so sadly fallen and the death of Saul was celebrated in an elegy whose pathos every age was to feel and repeat.

What stores of imagery lay treasured up in his mind to aid him in illustrating the Word in himself by the Word in nature! Of his teaching but a very small portion remains, but how full it is of similes that teach things spiritual by things natural, and thus ascend from creation to the Creator, from earth to heaven! The opening flower and the falling rain, the sunshine, the lightning, the gushing spring, the storm, the seed-time, the harvest, the rock, the sand, the wheat, the tares, the sky, the mountain, — these objects and such as these suggested to him profound moral and spiritual analogies. Thus was his soul open to the mind of God in nature. From the impulse given by him comes in great part that open vision of nature which the Christian ages have enjoyed. The arts have learned of him a lesson which the old classics little knew. Poetry and painting have won a great secret from this Divine Seer, and they have re-

deemed the landscape from pagan contempt, and transfigured things material in the light of God and eternity.

We will not pause longer here, but speak now of another influence concerned in our Lord's preparation. We mean the Bible, or the portion of it then written, — the Old Testament. Probably in his home, certainly in the synagogue, the Scriptures were read in his hearing, and history, psalm, prophecy, proverb, were not without response from his divinely attuned soul. But within and above the varied lessons of those hallowed pages, one topic presented itself to him which engrossed his thoughts and finally called him to his mission. Those Scriptures all turned upon one point, the true relation between man and God, a relation so sadly broken by transgression and to be restored by righteousness. Sin was the word that expressed the alienation of man from God. Salvation was the chief word that expressed reconciliation with God. In leading men to salvation, various means had been employed, and in a chosen Messiah these means were in the fulness of times to have their fulfilment. From a lost Eden to his own day, hope had been constantly active among men, and in the chosen race had taken a remarkable development. Patriarchs, lawgiver, kings, bards, prophets, — all had helped to form the Messianic promise; and whilst the royal sceptre passed from hand to hand, an ideal crown, rich with the patriotic hope and religious faith of every age, was treasured up in the hearts of the people, awaiting the coming of one who should rule with a glory brilliant as that of David, and over a kingdom as broad as that promised by Isaiah. That

crown was not to be wholly of gems, as viewed by a thoughtful reader of the Hebrew Scriptures. He who was to fulfil the hope of Eve, the promise to Abraham and Moses, the visions of the great prophets, was to be a suffering king, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Who should solve the perplexity, — who wear that crown so august, yet so full of thorns? That question engaged the mind of the youth who frequented the Nazarene synagogue and interrogated the doctors in the great temple at Jerusalem. That the answer came to him at last, we know: that it came to him gradually, we must believe, — for Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

How preposterous, under all the ordinary ideas held then concerning the Messiah, the thought of winning that crown must have appeared to him! Who was he, in that provincial village, that he should aspire to a kingdom above the proud thrones of the earth, — above the two thrones that overshadowed the globe, — that of the Cæsars with its polytheism, that of the Sassanides of Persia with its pantheism? Who shall presume even to renew and exalt the old kingdom of Judah? Look to the Roman legions, whose tried valor might daunt even the stout heart of Judas Maccabeus, — look to Herod, the minion of Rome, strong alike by his fawning and his cruelty, — look to the temple, now in the hands of a priesthood in general sadly blind to the truth which its own worship should teach, and pledged to defeat every reform not in the line of its own bigotry. Look at the world, divided so between the three dread powers, War, Lust, and Superstition. How then should he learn

that the Messiah's work was for him to do, and that his arm was to set up the standard upon the mountains, and his voice was to proclaim the year of the Lord?

Nature and the Bible were his teachers. One instructor more he had, in the life around him and within him. Life indeed is the central thing in nature and the Bible too, and all created things minister to its uses. Jesus studied life as it was in the world's too perverse heart,—as it was in the depths of his own soul. What is the great need and blessing,—what the deadly wound,—what the sovereign balm? He in his own village, and in his walks and journeys, saw well into the heart of man and its ways. He knew what was in man, nor needed that any should tell him. He undoubtedly, before his public ministry, as after, met various classes of persons who were eager to settle for him the great question, and tell what was in man and what was the best thing to do for him. In his Galilean home the conflicting opinions of the Jewish Church were probably not unknown. That he listened now to some strait-laced Pharisee, now to some cold, moralizing Sadducee, and now to some mild, contemplative Essene, there is no ground for doubting. He probably encountered more than one example of a worldly feeling like Pilate's, that settled all religious difficulties by acquiescing in all popular superstitions, and of a speculative subtilty like that of the Greeks, who lost sight of God's love in attempting to analyze his wisdom. He may also have met with some Roman traveller full of the philosophical Theism which the eclectic Cicero had taught so many of his countrymen; or some cultivated Hebrew fresh from the schools of

Alexandria, where Philo led the people to spiritualize the ancient Law, and to wait for the new emanation from Jehovah in the Logos that was to come and lead Israel to glory.

But all these could not help him, nor could the priests of the temple whom he consulted, once we know, many times perhaps. There was always an attraction to him in that temple, and his first visit thither after his infancy stands in close connection with his subsequent career. He went with his parents at the age fixed for the solemn presentation of the Hebrew youth at the national shrine. What power in those sacred courts, so identified with his great ancestor David, whose sublime lyrics still were sung in the priestly chants,—so rich in historical associations,—so hallowed on every side by the emblems of faith and worship! He could not quit the place, and was found, long after his companions had left, conversing with the priests, hearing them and asking them questions, and astonishing them by the wisdom of his words. Even then the Divine life rising within himself began to give that light upon the nature of true worship, which the pontiff and his retinue but dimly recognized. “Wist ye not,” was his decided, yet not harsh, reply to his troubled mother, who, alarmed at his absence during the evening halt of the returning journey, came to seek him,—“Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” The Son of Man was thus and afterwards becoming conscious that he was in an especial sense the Son of God. Yet no proud thought of his personal superiority mingled with that consciousness. Mildly he followed the request of his parents, and returned to

Nazareth. For years all that is said of him is in the simple words of the text that speaks of his increase in stature and in wisdom and in favor with God and man. The eighteen years of life between this event and his baptism could not have been without their effect upon his moral and spiritual development. That he dwelt during this time mainly at Nazareth, making the usual visits to Jerusalem at the great festivals,—that he lost no opportunity of acquiring wisdom,—that he was affectionate and devout, true to every worthy affection and rising into nearer communion with the Father and clearer sense of his Divine mission,—there is ample ground for believing. In the Divine economy nothing is lost, and this elect of heaven was not exempt from the discipline of earth. Nature, the Scriptures, life within and without, were his teachers, and to him they all spoke the voice of God. The spirit of God to him was in them all.

The crisis is now at hand. These previous influences were to be confirmed by an occurrence which should unite them all and call him at once to his work. His preparation for his ministry is to close with an act as touching as it is expressive. At the Jordan he met the ascetic prophet whose voice was at once the last word of the Old Dispensation and the first word of the New. His own soul from its depths responded to that word. Yea,—repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. God is to be manifested anew among men, and into hearts renewed men must receive the truth and spirit of his kingdom. What could be more expressive of the nature of that kingdom than the water of baptism, emblem of the spirit that purifies and quickens. Je-

sus acknowledged the precursor and demanded of him baptism. The Son of Man, he by that expressive symbol indicated the character of the renewal which mankind needed.

And now obviously his spirit rose into clearer consciousness of his mission. The aspiration struggling within was confirmed by a sign from without, from Him whose spirit bore witness with his when the voice came forth from the unseen world: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But that power of darkness, which is ever ready to baffle every noble purpose and prevent every good work, rose before him as never before. Overwhelmed with the sense of his august work, he turned to the forest, and in its shades gave himself to meditation and prayer. He wrestled with the adversary that came to tempt and thwart him as he was crossing the threshold of his great undertaking. Son of God, he was still Son of Man, and tempted like as we. How significant, interpret it as we may, the story of the temptation! The dark powers in those three forms of desire that are the sources of so much sin rose against him and he rebuked them all. The temptation to use his signal power for the satisfaction of the appetites, or to win adherents by dazzling display or by enlisting in his aid the forces of worldly ambition, he discerned and withstood. He tore off from the tempter his insidious disguises, drove him baffled away, and in his stead won good angels to his side. Strengthened by the trial, his sense of his Divine mission confirmed by the triumph, he is now ready to go forth upon his work.

II. What did he mean to do? What was his

plan? Of this only can we now speak, reserving the subject of its execution for the next essay. We shall speak more definitely by seeking for the leading characteristics of his plan,—its aim, its law, its method.

What was his aim? Let any one of his most conspicuous statements of its nature be our reply. Take for example his early explicit annunciation of his mission in the synagogue of Nazareth. His inward struggles are over and his ministry has begun. Now, preceded by rumors of his singular gifts, he is again at home in Nazareth, and as of old goes to church, the church of his nation, on the Sabbath;—fact worthy of note, when we remember that by him the Synagogue has been expanded into the Christian Church, and thus the memorial of this visit is now in every land. He asked for the scroll of the prophets, and from the manuscript read the words of Isaiah, describing the year of Jubilee: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captive and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Then he began to say, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears; and when they looked upon him, first with wonder and then with anger, he told them plainly of their narrowness and worldliness,—reminded them that of old the prophets had been rejected by their own people, and the Syrian and Sidonian had received blessings refused by Israel.

Is not here a declaration of his aim, as the Re-

deemer of men,—of his mission to redeem men from their sins and miseries,—to proclaim the great jubilee of emancipation, not for Judah only, but for the race of men? He was to be the liberator of mankind, freeing them from earthly bonds, and opening to them the liberty of the kingdom of God.

What was his law?—his law, we ask, for true liberty is but the harmony of law. Do we seek the Sinai of the New Testament, go to the Mount of the Beatitudes, and there you have the Christian code. There is a full statement of the principles of the Redeemer's kingdom. There the greater than Moses speaks, not to destroy, but to fulfil, the ancient tables. Analyze that sermon, and own at once the breadth and height of the plan of Christ. Consider the dispositions so blessed by him in the outset, as essentials of the heavenly kingdom,—poorness of spirit, meekness, longing after righteousness, purity of heart, peace-making, long-suffering. These are the graces that are to win the rewards of the new theocracy, its comfort, its heritage of the earth, its spiritual fulness, its mercy, its vision of God, its Divine adoption. Then follows its comprehensive statement of all laws as comprised under two master-principles, the love of God and the neighbor,—with a contrast between these two principles and the prevalent exclusiveness and formalism. The contrast is then carried out in reference to the general characteristics of true and false religion, under the particulars of alms-giving, prayer and fasting, judgment of self and of neighbors, and the true principle of reciprocity is stated in that simple golden rule so fatal to all Pharisaic righteousness. Words of caution and exhortation close

these precious counsels, — caution against deceivers, exhortation to fidelity and perseverance that his disciples might build as upon the rock.

Here surely is the law of the new kingdom, and to carry it out in the hearts of men was the work given him to do. The Evangelists from beginning to end illustrate the same principles, and time would fail us should we quote even the most significant passages. Such was the aim, such the law. What was the method? His work, which we are to illustrate in our next discussion, is the best answer to the question; but we will not withhold a word of reply now as to the chief element of his method, nay, its ground plan. The new kingdom was to rest upon him. In him men were called to believe, through him find the Father and breathe the true life. He was, under God, to be its head, exemplify its virtues, teach its principles, impart its spirit, lead its people, bear its conflict, win its triumphs. Upon him the great enterprise is to rest, and when he is no more in the world his followers have promise of help from God through him in the spiritual world.

More and more clearly becomes revealed to him his own impending lot, — his sufferings, death, resurrection, ministry in heaven. As we looked to the Synagogue for his aim, and to the Mount for his law, look now to the Table of Communion for his method in its essential thought. Hear those parting words, so full of majesty and tenderness, pathos and sublimity, — words telling the disciples of his union with God, their union with him, and through him their union with each other. He must go from them and still be with them as never before. Through the dark shad-

ows of that morrow of anguish, the light of God and heaven cast its softened beams, as he told them of the Father's mansions, the abodes opened for them, and the promise of the Comforter whilst they were in the world. The cross he saw, and above it the crown. There was to be a great sacrifice because of sin, and to rebuke sin by the power of a Divine love. There was to be a resurrection bringing life and immortality to full light. There was to be a ministry in the heavenly world, where he was to be still mindful of his own,—the medium to them of spiritual blessings, their way to the Father evermore.

Such was his plan in its aim, law, method. Or, to sum up all in a word, his plan was to be the Saviour of men,—redeeming them from sin and its consequences, manifesting the law of holiness, and reconciling men to God through his mediation. Such was his plan, interpreted in its relations to men. Viewed in its bearings upon the Divine government, his plan was to establish among men a kingdom of God, universal, spiritual, and eternal,—universal, without limit of race or nation or caste,—spiritual, or having its foundations upon spiritual truth and opening into the spiritual world,—eternal, because universal and spiritual.

The preparation and the plan,—how leave the topic? Well may we ask the question, whether sadly or cheerfully, so sadly are great projects so often rebuked by small achievements or by utter disappointment. Who has not planned, sometimes nobly too, for self and for others, nay, for the world? The way of all humanity is strewn with the ruins of wrecked purposes, defeated hopes. Test the plan of Christ

with that of one honored before the greatest earthly throne, whilst he was a child in an obscure Galilean home. Read the poem in which Virgil, in strains that have been thought stolen from Isaiah, or coming from an inspiration that moved him to a prophecy deeper than he was conscious of,—the poem in which Virgil sets forth the splendid future in store for the heir of Augustus. Vain, all in vain! Marcellus found an early grave; the sceptre in store for him descended to a tyrant, was in time wrested away by a barbarian, and at last laid down before the cross which ages afterwards indicated the empire of that Nazarene child.

That preparation and plan,—cheerfully we leave them now; God's forethought for a future already signally verified, but not already fully developed. Not in vain. Not in vain, say people of every tongue and clime on the earth,—Not in vain, say the great company on high. By whatever humble measure of Christian grace we have ever known or now enjoy, we say, Not in vain that preparation and plan.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
For he hath visited and redeemed his people,
Whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us,
To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

X.

THE MESSIAH IN HIS MINISTRY.

DIVINELY endowed and providentially prepared, as we have seen, for his mission, the Messiah went forth to his work. His plan in its main features we have already considered. In the Synagogue, on the Mount, at the Table of Communion, he stated distinctly his purpose of establishing the kingdom of God among men in its universality, unity, and spirituality. From the plan we now proceed to speak of its execution. The topic embraces considerations of his work, of the world's reception of him, and the result of his work in the world.

I. His work. In comparison with what he undertook to do, all enterprises ever before attempted sink into insignificance. We cannot for a moment compare it with any scheme of empire before planned or achieved. Other conquerors had aimed to subdue the world, but it was to themselves and for their own pleasure, — not to God and by their own self-sacrifice. The great lawgiver was called to a gigantic work, but he had in his behalf the force of an exclusive nationality and the spur of an ancient hatred, as through perils he led his people to a land deemed their peculiar birthright, from a country identified with their

bondage. The most enlightened sages of classic antiquity, the Platos and Ciceros of literature, mused upon a higher realm of intellectual communion, in which all barriers of clime and creed were to be removed and all true souls to meet together in allegiance to a law universal and eternal. To Jesus of Nazareth and to him alone belongs the glory of undertaking to establish in the world a kingdom not political, but spiritual; not national, but universal; not in the vagueness of dreamy speculation, but in the unity of active force. He undertook this in the face of a theocracy proud of its own exclusiveness, a race jealous of its peculiar prerogative, and a mighty empire claiming to itself the allegiance of all the earth. On one side stand priest, people, and emperor; on the other side, one whose name was then hardly known beyond the limits of Nazareth.

What interest at once attaches to his method, or way to his object! Obviously there are two ways of gaining power over men: one is by acting upon the souls of men and thence upon the outward life, the other is by acting upon the outward life and thence upon the soul,—the first working from within outward, the second from without inward. Jesus used both methods, for he came both to establish the reign of God in the minds of men and the ways of the world; but his great object was to act directly upon the mind, and thus develop the Divine kingdom from within outward. His favorite comparisons in illustrating spiritual processes were drawn from vegetative and animal life, in which from an interior germ the whole visible organism takes its rise. In this

spirit he spoke of the office of the sower and the nature of the new birth or regenerate life.

In order to act upon the souls of men, he must communicate with them. His ministry was thus, first of all, that of the Word. He himself was the Word, or the Father's expression of his own mind. The Divine mind, whose organ he was, he must express to men. Exalted indeed the office! Other men, patriarchs, lawgivers, prophets, were sent to utter words of God as revealed to them. Jesus Christ was the Word of God itself, for in him was life, and the life was the light of men. August mission indeed, thus to speak the mind of God to men, — not merely Divine thoughts, but the Divine thought, — not merely Divine reasonings, but the Divine reason, — not merely Divine truths, but the Divine truth! He taught with authority, and not as a Scribe. What was his method of teaching, — what its manner, what its matter?

Its manner was various as circumstances required, yet ever consistent and uncompromising as the truth itself. His principle was to say what he had to say in the way best fitted to make it sink down into the minds of men and there take root and spring up and bear fruit. He was bound by no rhetorical rules, no canons of scholastic criticism. He spoke God's truth to men in God's spirit, and never man spake like this man. He was the greatest of orators whilst aiming at none of what are called the arts of oratory. By the way-side and in the synagogue, at table and in the temple, in conversation with unlettered peasants and with the best-cultivated minds of the nation, with outcasts too abject to hope for any kindly ministry and with Pharisees too proud to learn from any

man's word, he did the work given him to do as the great prophet sent in the fulness of times. The form of his word varied with the demands of the occasion or the state of mind of the hearer. In short sentences, in pungent questions, in familiar conversations, in parables, sometimes obvious and sometimes enigmatic, in lengthened discourses, now methodical and argumentative, and now rising into the lyrical rapture and devout fervor of psalm and prophecy, he delivers his message, thus exhibiting a compass of adaptation without parallel, in language ranging from the sententious saying like the noted reply to his wily questioners, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," to the more sustained discourse like that recorded by the Evangelist who leaned upon his bosom at the last supper, beginning with a declaration that the great crisis was at hand, and ending with that prayer which has been to many souls in the pangs of dissolution as the opening of heaven, and which unbelief cannot repeat without denying itself, and melting, though for a season only, into the tenderness of faith.

Such was his manner, and if any desire a more minute description, let them think of what he was as well as what he said, and then realize anew how he said it. The matter,—or that which he said,—how shall any words but his own describe it? His topic was always in substance the same, however various the circumstances and illustration. It was always of God and the way to live in God, or within the purity, love, and peace of his kingdom; whether rebuking sin or encouraging faith, whether discoursing of nature in its blooming life, or of the grave with

its mouldering dust, ever the same. The Father's offended law is the ground of sin, — his long-suffering love the motive to penitence and faith; his benign providence is reflected in flower and sunshine, — it is his spirit that breathes the immortal hope. To live in reconciliation with God is to pass from death to life and to enter in some degree the kingdom of heaven.

Thus aiming to teach men the character of God and the way to find him, Christ did not scruple to declare explicitly his own office as Mediator, and bid men believe in him as sent of the Father to lead them to himself. In the Saviour humility had its perfect work, alike in the meekness of his spirit and the majesty of his authority. In his meekness and his majesty he deferred alike to the Father, and was at once humble and mighty because he leaned upon and represented the will of the Omnipotent and Eternal. Whether bearing so gently the insults of the rude soldiery, or saying before the proconsul of Rome, "Thou sayest that I am king: for this cause was I born, and therefore came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth," — he was alike true to his mission as the Messiah of God. Such briefly was his word in its manner and in its matter, — in both alike aiming to bring men into the kingdom of God, out of the life of sin and above the enticements of the senses and the cheats of the world.

But his work was not confined to the word, — it extended to deeds; — how many in number we cannot know, for the record does not aim to be complete, nay, expressly disclaims all attempts to narrate all that he said or did. Of the character of the deeds, however,

as of the words, we are left in no manner of doubt. Nothing can exceed the simple eloquence of the expression, "he went about doing good." Indeed, it is not easy to separate his word from his works, for both expressed the same truths and affections. His deeds are not acts of mere power or official authority, but have without exception a moral and spiritual expression. Nay, what virtue, what grace, what truth of God or man or heaven, has he not taught in deed as well as in word? To what need of body or of mind has he not ministered, — what woe has he not pitied, and pitying not relieved? From loathsome disease and the fearful lot of the unsound mind to the lesser shades of sorrow in the form of despondency and loneliness, he ministered to men, and his name is everywhere a synonyme for mercy. His miracles all had a moral and spiritual character. Vouched for as they are by historical evidence in the written word and monumental events, they bear in themselves the evidence of their genuineness in their perfect consistency with his own moral traits and their inalienable relation with his own express teachings. The works can no more be separated from the word than the word from the works. Nay, the work is the word in action, and the word is the work from the lips.

Of the miracles of Christ I cannot speak in any fulness now, and indeed the topic has been too amply discussed to need agitation here. It is enough to say, that they stand upon evidence more satisfactory than that of the undoubted facts of ancient history, and reflect the moral beauty and power of the Gospel; and whilst it must be conceded that our Saviour himself by no means relied upon them as the sole, or even

chief, credentials of his mission, it is nevertheless clear that he repeatedly appealed to them as proof of his commission, and he who denies them must mutilate the New Testament and substitute a Christ of his own fancy for the Christ of the Scriptures. Jesus himself was averse to ministering to the appetite for marvels so common among the Jews, and sought therefore by his miraculous works to lead them to the higher life which is its own best evidence. He evidently recognized three classes among his hearers, and strove to bring them all into the highest class ; — first, those who were to be acted upon only by the evidence of the senses : “ Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe ” ; — secondly, those who had a vague and imperfect spiritual sense, and were led by miracles to greater confidence and light ; thirdly, those who, instead of being led to faith by miracles, rather interpreted miracles by faith, as the reasonable expressions of Divine power and love. No language will express the truth better than that which Neander uses in his noted *Life of Christ* : — “ The words of Christ himself assure us that the communication of the life of God to men was the greatest of all miracles, the essence and the aim of all, and, further, that it was to be the standing miracle of all ages after. ‘ He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.’ ”

Such, in general terms, was the work of Christ in its word and deed. Of the sphere in which it was wrought in reference to time, place, and persons, some-

thing remains to be said. In time, his ministry did not exceed three years; in place, it was limited mainly to the old land of the Jews, including Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, and was exercised principally in three leading circuits through the whole country, the chief part of the labor being done in Galilee, where more of the old and simple Hebrew faith prevailed, and priestly formalism and Pharisaic traditions had less sway. In reference to the persons within his influence, it is impossible to estimate their character except by general classes, or their number except in very general terms. His blessing fell on all who would receive it, as freely as that light to which he compared himself, and which throws its golden tints on the soft cheek of infancy and the furrowed brow of age, cheers robust health in its round of labor and comforts the sad invalid whose days are wasting away, guides the sister of charity on her errands of mercy and shows the way in which the prodigal wanderer may return home. The persons mentioned by name or class in the New Testament, as coming more or less within the influence of Christ, are numerous. Nay, who shall undertake to number those who are acted upon by any true and living word, whether from man in his common estate, or from the man who was human and Divine?

The chief point of his method in his word and deed consisted in training a certain number of persons to be witnesses of his ministry and representatives of his kingdom and principles. He had several circles of followers, besides many miscellaneous persons or families with whom he had especial affinity. Of his direct followers the seventy preachers were the outer-

most circle, the twelve disciples the intermediate circle, and of these, his three favorite companions, Peter, James, and John, were the inmost circle. Of his method in training the twelve we shall speak more fully hereafter, in treating of the most prominent in their number. What teaching and training that was, — and what a transformation from ignorant peasants of Galilee into sages in heavenly truth and apostles of a kingdom not of this world! How gently and discreetly he dealt with them, — how patient of their follies and infirmities, — how unwearied in enlarging their vision and deepening their faith! Never since time was has there been a relation between human hearts as that between the Saviour and his disciples. All that has been best and holiest in the development of humanity since, has been the fruit of that Vine and those branches. Of two of them, and also of one who came after them, we shall speak particularly hereafter. The two represented in the Christian dispensation the two principles which had been so marked in preparing the way for the Messiah. Peter was essentially a theocratic man, and trod in the footsteps of the Maccabees, ever earnest for concentrating energy and securing unity in the Church. John was preëminently the spiritual man, and trod in the footsteps of the Essenes, ever the champion of aspiration and enlargement. Fitly one bears in art, as an emblem of his genius, the keys that lock and unlock; fitly the other bears the emblem of the eagle, that transcends all barriers, and soars above the cloud into the empyreal light. Beautiful was their union with the Master, — beautiful the harmony in variety presented in their lives, alike when they sat at his

feet, or when, after his ascension, they guided the flock in the spirit of the Good Shepherd, then no more in the world.

II. Such was the work of Christ in its word, deed, and influence. It exercised an inward spiritual power and an outward world-renewing power. How could it then do otherwise than bring him into some relations of antagonism with the world? Next to the work he did, we now proceed to glance at the world in which he did it, especially at the nature of the hostility which was exhibited towards him. Of the classes of minds within his field of action who listened to him with favor more or less profound, who shall speak so expressly as he himself in the parable of the sower who sowed by the way-side, on stony ground, among thorns, and in part upon good ground? What better description can be given of hearers then and now, — the idle and capricious, the superficial and excitable, the worldly and ambitious, and last and best of all, the earnest and steadfast? All these varieties he knew, and perhaps had among his immediate followers.

Of these we cannot speak, but pass to his foes. How could there be any hatred of him who was pure goodness and whose life was continued mercy? His great offence was in the fact that his whole ministry was a constant rebuke upon the spirit of the state, the church, and the people. His enemies were of four classes.

The priest party, with whom the Pharisees or traditionists were identical, led the attack. That some of them were honest in their opposition, although proving their want of a right spirit in cherishing

such opinions, we are not disposed to deny. But that the rancor of their hostility sprang from the despotic spirit that would crush the man who denied their right to lord it over the people of God and shut up the Divine light in their dark lanterns, is not to be questioned. The monopolists, who had narrowed and corrupted the Mosaic system, and made the theocracy subservient to their love of gold and power, vowed vengeance upon him who preached the Gospel of the Heavenly Father, a spiritual worship and a universal kingdom.

Next came the politicians, who judged of all men and things by their bearing upon the wires which bound the state to their supple fingers. These were led by Herod the king, who played a double part between the priesthood and Rome, anxious only to keep and enlarge his power. The Herodians conspired to doom Jesus to death, not so much from any bitter personal hostility as from a determination to out off any movement that might lead to dangerous commotions, and were ready to play into the hands of the Sanhedrim and the priests. In the final interview Herod himself expressed rather contempt than anger or fear. The gross voluptuary saw not into the power that was to immortalize his own disgrace, and dismissed with sneers, as an airy enthusiast, Him whose manger-cradle he had sought to stain with innocent blood.

Next came the Romish power, represented by the proconsul Pilate, a thorough-going diplomatist of the Roman stamp, — worldly, sceptical, making light of all religion, and quite as ready to tolerate one religion as another if the imperial state received no detri-

ment; but not a cruel man, nor disposed to inflict suffering of his own accord, unless pushed on to it by threats or alleged state policy.

Lastly came the people, the Jewish mob, full of superstition and hatred, burning for the old times of conquest and plenty, yearning for the day when the banner of the lion of Judah should again be unfurled, and the shades of Joshua, Saul, and David should usher on the Messiah prince to glorious victory, and the Roman eagle should be laid low in the dust. Excitable and capricious, they followed their hosannas of homage by shouts of execration, "Crucify him! crucify him!" They shouted for the release of a vile robber and murderer, and demanded the blood of him who had raised their expectations of triumph only to baffle them by his words of peace. Vividly indeed has an ancient master, Tintoretto, exhibited the opposition of the people to the Messiah in a single feature of his picture, which is at once a touch of genius and a chapter of history. At the crucifixion a palm-branch lies trampled under foot of man and beast, and thus connects that scene of anguish with the previous jubilee, when green branches were strewed beneath the feet of the victim and hosannas rent the air. Fact often enough renewed, the palm trampled upon by those who gave it in honor! Such was the world in its opposition to the Son of Man. The crisis must come.

III. Of the crisis and its results we now speak, as we close. The week of the Passion saw its development. From Monday to Friday the two powers now brought into contest developed their character as never before, and the simple evangelical narrative rises into an intensity and grandeur without parallel. The

Lamb of God goes to the sacrifice wreathed as with garlands whose divine beauty comes not from gardens of this earth. His entrance into Jerusalem is a symbolic act indicating the supremacy over men of a spiritual power which he represented. Higher rose his spirit of faith and love, more fiercely burned the rage of his foes. On the eve of his death, while they were plotting his destruction, he was discoursing of God and the heavenly life at the table of communion, from which hatred was to receive its great rebuke and charity to derive its enduring inspiration. On the morrow the great issue came, and he stood confronted with his foes. In Annas and Caiaphas, in Herod, in Pilate, in the multitude, all classes of antagonists to the Divine Man were represented and brought into contact with the Prince of Peace. On the cross the great antagonism had its consummation. The kingdom of light and darkness stood at issue. I will not try to trace out the moral significance of that scene; much less, develop its doctrinal bearings. Dying he conquered. His work in word and deed was fulfilled in that act of sacrificial love and victorious faith. It was the crown of his ministry of reconciliation or atonement. It repeated the whole Gospel in spirit, and the seven words of the cross condense the Sermon on the Mount and embody the ministry of years. Viewed as a manifestation of love, and, in connection with the subsequent resurrection, as a revelation of immortality, it carried out the previous aim of his ministry in leading men to God and bringing life and immortality to light. That it had interior connections with the Divine plans, and removed obstacles to the restoration of man to

the Divine favor, the Scriptures plainly assert, and their language with reference to the great sacrifice we adopt, little as we may be disposed to adopt as commandments the doctrines and theories of men. There indeed was the great sacrifice which gave sin its great rebuke and the love of God its great manifestation. Viewed on its Divine side, it is to be regarded as an exhibition of God's mercy revealing the enormity of sin in contrast with the holiness of its innocent victim, and opening a new way of reconciliation by the power of such sacrificial love with its sanctions of heavenly influence. It was God's approach to man in his anointed, to reconcile man with himself.

"O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,
So scornfully surrounded
With thorns, thine only crown,

"What language shall I borrow
To thank thee, dearest friend,
For this, thy dying sorrow,
This love that knew no end?

"O, make me thine for ever,
And should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never,
Outlive my love to thee."

The results of the great crisis are clear. The cross was the way to higher life and power. The Prince of Peace passed from it to his heavenly throne, and the kingdom before as the least of seeds grew till it stretched its branches over the whole earth. From the spiritual world Jesus exercised his ministry still, and exercises it yet. From that time his disciples

felt his influence as never before. They depended upon him still, and went from the first to the second stage of dependence. While he was with them in the world, they leaned on him for strength and guidance, drawn towards him by his divine love and attraction, although scarcely understanding why, or able to state their faith, except to say that in him they believed. Now they knew him better and felt him more. Now they were one with him more truly than when walking by his side or sitting at his feet. He himself pointed out this twofold relation when he spoke of his death as the transition-point between the lower and the higher consciousness. "Henceforth, I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Thus by his death and resurrection, the ministry of Christ, instead of being broken, was consummated, — instead of being ended, was exalted. He passed within the veil, and thenceforth became the Mediator between two worlds; — one with God in heavenly communion, his office was to draw men into union with himself, and thus with one another. Has he not exercised this work in all ages since? Nay, what fact in the history of men is more obvious, than the rise and progress of a kingdom, one, universal, spiritual, founded upon Christ and having allegiance to God through him?

Does any one ask which is the true ministry on earth, or what hierarchy or sect represents the Messiah now? We enter in reply into no questions of priestly succession or authoritative prerogative. They repre-

sent and repeat his ministry who practically illustrate his spirit and truth, and aim to make life more heavenly and man more Christlike. Large is the benediction, "Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity";—large the catholicity of the Saviour's own prayer for the unity of his own in all time, that they might be one in him and the Father, and in the light of such catholicity sectarianism must hang its head in shame. The true Church is that which dwells in union with the Master, and every ministry is true that in any measure repeats his word and revives his work. Under every creed and every name such ministry has been exercised, and its existence in the world is and has been man's best wealth. The great hierarchies that have overspread the world have never been utterly without the true spirit, and they and all communities of Christians have never been deserted by Him who promised to be with his own even unto the end of the world.

Yes, in this bustling, scheming, reasoning, trading, money-loving nineteenth century, the Divine Master's ministry is still with us. To true hearts throughout the world, he is still the Mediator between man and God, the bond between earth and heaven, the ground of the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Let a low material and miscalled philosophy analyze and doubt as it will, until it reduces man into a perishing thing of dust, trampling the soul beneath the senses and confounding the creature with the Creator, the best thought of mankind now turns with faith to things spiritual, and owns Jesus as the head of our race, the connecting bond between man and God. We want

Christ, — we cannot do without him. In mind and heart and will, we need him, — his light our guide, his love our solace, his might our strength. We need a companionship beyond aught this world offers, rebuking sin, encouraging faith, quickening virtue, cheering sorrow, overcoming death. The soul needs him, the world needs him. Soul-regenerating, world-renewing, the Messiah still lives and will live for us, whether to our peace or our condemnation.

What is life without Christ, — what is death without him! We claim no prophetic power to foresee the speedy triumph of his kingdom. Enough has been done to justify his work of promise, and with God we leave the knowledge of the work yet remaining to do. For ourselves we are responsible. We are called to live in companionship with the Master, — we are called to shed from our lips and lives the light that he brought into the world. Look to him with trust and affection. Weak and frail though we may be, he will treat us tenderly and not cast us off. He will reveal himself and the Father more to us as we persevere, — he will give to life its only abiding peace, and throw upon the grave its only imperishable hope.

Then tenderly, humbly speak the name above every human name. Connect it with every aspiration, — breathe it in every prayer.

To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ for ever.

XI.

PETER AND THE KEYS.

WE have considered the ministry of Jesus Christ the Messiah in its plan and prosecution. We now proceed to speak of the most conspicuous of those persons to whom the Messiah after his ascension intrusted the affairs of his spiritual kingdom. We begin with the man named first on the list of disciples, first in the enthusiasm of his faith, the force of his will, and the glory of his name, although by no means first in the perfection of his character.

He represents the Christian faith in its element of executive energy and the Christian kingdom in its aspect of theocratic unity and power. He was emphatically the rock of the Church, representing its stability rather than its progress. He was the keeper of the keys, aiming to guard the New Jerusalem from all unworthy inmates. His office we recognize as divinely appointed, for wherever there is law, there must be order, and the champion of order, like Peter, is as essential as the apostle of love, like John, or of liberty, like Paul.

To trace the rise and progress of the career of him whose name has been exalted above that of all princes of the earth, and raised to a dignity before which

the fame of Alexanders and Cæsars seems tame, we go to the lake of Galilee, and look upon the peasant fishermen there tending their nets. Two brothers were there on the shores of Bethsaida, pursuing their usual task, when they were accosted by one whose word changed marvellously the whole current of their being. They were already respecters of the national religion, and one, perhaps both of them, had given proof of earnestness and aspiration by listening eagerly to the preaching of John, the baptizing precursor of Christ. Once before they had met Christ and heard some of his discourses, and the character of one of the brothers was immediately recognized by the Saviour for its peculiar force, and he was named by him Cephas, or the Stone. But they had returned to their employment, and had it not been for another meeting, the former interview would have borne little fruit, or have been remembered simply as among the more interesting religious experiences of their lives. But now the crisis came. Mark the peculiarity of the Saviour's address to the man destined to be the foremost of the Apostles, and so distinguished for the practical zeal, the singular realism of his character. He meets at once the demands of his nature, teaches him how to throw his net so as to secure a draught more than sufficient to make up for the whole night's fruitless toil, and wins him to faith and gratitude at once by manifesting practical wisdom with spiritual authority. "Fear not," said he to the astonished fisherman, "from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

Thus the leader of the Apostles entered upon his discipleship, whose course and consummation we would briefly trace. Turn from the scene at the sea-

side, and mark the transition between his humble exclamation there, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" and the earnestness of his faith at Cæsarea Philippi, and on the Mount of Transfiguration.

To Cæsarea Philippi, the ancient Panias, or shrine of Pan, now bearing in homage the name of the Roman emperor, a place interesting from historical associations and natural beauty, Jesus and his disciples came, perhaps to see the Jordan flowing forth from the rock. On this spot, thus connected with the old empires of superstition and war, the Prince of Peace spoke those words so frequently enlisted in behalf of spiritual despotism, but in themselves so expressive of the triumphs of his kingdom of love. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" asked the Master. Then came from Peter the answer of faith, and from Jesus the assurance of power in the life of that faith. Trust in Christ the Son of the living God, this is the ground of strength, the rock of stability; and they that lead men to it open to them the kingdom of heaven. Soon comes the Transfiguration, and the same impetuous soul who owned Jesus as the Messiah so fervently, asks eagerly that he may dwell on that mount always, and always enjoy that glorified presence of the Master with the great lawgiver and prophet.

How can one so fervent and so favored possibly fall? The answer is given by every man's experience of his own weakness, and the simple record of the bold Apostle's infirmity. At the table of the Last Supper, his confidence knew no limit: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet I will never

be offended ; I will lay down my life for thy sake." One who knew him better than he knew himself foretold his apostasy before the crowing cock should herald the morning, and only drew forth the more earnest assertion, " Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."

How truthful the evangelical account of the progress of vain confidence to utter treachery, — the leaden slumber of weary nature in the garden of Gethsemane, the startling shock of the Master's arrest, the foolhardy assault by the rash Apostle upon the person of one in the company of the priests, — the following of the Master afar off, — the mind wavering between fear and hope, constancy and faithlessness, — the denial, first in the insidious form of timid non-committal, deepening gradually into the darkness of solemn adjuration, — then the utter contrition and penitence beneath the mild yet reproachful look of him to whom he had pledged his faith in the most sacred of obligations ! All this is given with a child-like simplicity that mere art vainly might attempt. Honest indeed is the New Testament, so true to the principle, " Nothing extenuate nor ought set down in malice." The foremost disciple is placed before us without disguise and without favor. This remark only we will make as to the form of Peter's weakness as contrasted with John's fidelity. The denier was by nature or disposition a realist, looking upon things in their aspect of practical power, and therefore was tempted in the weak part when he saw the being whom he regarded as God's vicegerent in the hands of the soldiery and priesthood, arraigned as a criminal. He did not understand the event, for the

sequel only could explain it. John, the more spiritually-minded disciple, whose faith came from a heart of love rather than from homage towards power, loved and believed to the end, and followed his Master to the cross.

Yet the Apostle falls only to rise again. His wrong was more from the error of the understanding and weakness of impulse, than from perversity of heart. To him first of the disciples the Master appeared after his resurrection, and he was first of them to descend into the tomb where the Saviour was laid. The evangelical narrative closes with the account of Christ's last commission to him to feed the lambs of his flock, — a commission fearfully emphatic from its threefold repetition and the threefold question, "Lovest thou me?" so significantly referring to the triple denial, and blending tender counsel with pointed caution.

Thus the Apostle, restored to favor, receives a new commission to labor in the kingdom of Christ. The Evangelists here drop the pen, and the writer of the Acts of the Apostles becomes the historian instead. In his narrative, the Galilean fisherman appears again before us, and as leader of the company of disciples. Two significant occasions need only be named to mark his influence in the early Church. On the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem he stood at the head of the twelve, and interpreted that occasion which marked the removal of the barrier between the faithful on earth and the just in heaven, and flooded the souls of the true-hearted with divine light and peace, making them feel that the Master was with them still as never before, and by the great atonement life on earth

opened into the life heavenly and eternal. Thus the barrier between man and God was broken under his ministering word. Again, that between man and man was also cast down. He, so theocratic by nature,—the man of power and champion of unity, was first to welcome the Gentiles into the Church. At Joppa,—the Joppa so signalized by Napoleon's alleged deed of wholesale murder,—he had the vision that so rebuked Jewish narrowness, and forthwith at Cæsarea he opened to Cornelius the Italian the doors of that empire which has thrown the power of Rome into the shade, and exalted the dove of peace above the eagle of dominion.

Still, the old Jewish leaven works within, and he almost repents of his mental enlargement. His strong tendency to unity and concentration leads him to insist too much upon the Jewish ritual, and to shrink from the noble catholicity and liberality of John and Paul. But his heart is right, and his understanding at last feebly acquiesces. The apostolic history leaves no shadow of disagreement between minds so variously endowed and disciplined. At the apostolic council convened at Jerusalem, he who bore the keys of the Church, through his spirit of faith, was foremost to condemn Jewish exclusiveness and to open the doors freely to all the faithful, insisting upon moral and spiritual fitness, and releasing the Gentiles from the Jewish yoke.

Thus ministering at Jerusalem and Joppa, devoting himself for years to the welfare of the Oriental churches, he stands connected in the closing portions of his life with two illustrious cities, that associate his name with the mighty empires of the past as well as

the great empire of the future. His first and only undisputed Epistle bears the date of Babylon, whilst tradition assigns his martyrdom to Rome. He who is called first of the Popes thus guided the churches from the metropolis where Alexander died, and breathed out his spirit in martyrdom in that queenly city where Cæsar fell beneath the poniards of nominal friends, little dreaming that the crown refused by his ambition would ever be worn by successors in the name of a fisherman of that Galilee which was the synonyme of rudeness and contempt.

Thus briefly have we traced the career of this man. What now shall we say of his character? what of his peculiar office or commission? First of his character, or of the man himself, let us speak. He that knew what was in man, nor needed that any should tell him, must be the best judge of his leading Apostle's characteristics. He called him Cephas, or Petros, the Man of Rock, indicating thus alike the strength of his will and the stability of the foundation upon which he was to rest. Was there any fitness in this name? How could the wavering and once apostate disciple be compared in any just sense to a rock? Fitly enough. Does not the rock tremble and sway to and fro, almost with every wind, unless it be based upon a sufficient foundation? There are huge masses of granite that a child's finger may sway at will, or which the tread of the Alpine chamois may loosen, and dash in thunder and ruin into the ravines below. Until he found rest upon the true foundation, so Peter *rocked*, and the very strength of his will showed itself in impulsive waverings. The events of the death and resurrection of Christ, in connection with

his own humiliation and penitence, were needed to settle him on the true basis, and thus combine strength of material with stability of foundation. Or changing the figure, and comparing him to that primal mechanic power, the lever, which is of no practical use without a fulcrum or point of rest, his energy toiled in the vanity of self-reliance, until Jesus finished the great foundation, and placed beneath the mighty force of the impulsive Apostle the needed point of rest, and the mighty lever then wrought its appointed work.

He was the executive man of the apostolic company. His age, so mature, and his disposition, so earnest and practical, fitted him for this office. He was, in the large sense of the term, the business-man, the preëminent realist, among his brethren. He asked what was to be done, rather than what was to be thought or what to be felt. Yet he by no means sacrificed meditation or affection to practical affairs, nor, in the absorption of activity, forgot what his Master had taught him, — that truth is the light, and love the motive, of genuine power. His First Epistle indicates the character of the man, in the maturity of his experience, the ripeness of his piety and charity. It is eminently practical from beginning to end, commencing with a grateful ascription of praise to God for the gift of the Gospel of Christ, and calling upon Christians to apply its principles faithfully to their daily lives and common relations. It omits none of the leading practical duties, presenting the ethics of the home, the state, and the Church in a manner blending the fervor of devotion with the calm wisdom of one experienced in years as in vicissitudes. Par-

ents, children, masters, servants, citizens, pastors, people, all are included in the aged Apostle's appeals, and sharers in his benediction: "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus."

Happy in leaving this legacy to the Church, happy ages after in finding a peerless commentator like the wise and pious Leighton, who has inlaid these apples of gold in such pictures of silver.

Such being the spirit of the man, as indicated by his life and writings, we are now earnest to know what office he was called to fill in the Christian dispensation or kingdom of Christ. It is very obvious that he is named first on the list of disciples, was foremost among them during the Master's earthly ministry, and in the planting and training of the churches immediately after the ascension. The language of Jesus to him, moreover, is very peculiar. What can be more marked than the expressions in that text: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church"; "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," &c.? How shall we interpret these and the like words? Is there not a most obvious meaning, removed at once from the unbelief that would explain Christ's words into mere rhetoric, and the superstition that would build upon them the most abject forms of spiritual despotism? Our Lord asked his disciples their views of his own office, and when Peter expressed his conviction that he was Son of the living God, the Master blessed him for the confession of faith, and then spoke of this faith and the spirit determined to cling to it as the rock or true foundation of the Church, declaring that he who should be foremost to proclaim it would open the kingdom of

heaven to men. What is this but the general doctrine of the New Testament, that Christ was sent to establish the kingdom of heaven among men, and that the diffusion of his principles was the opening of this kingdom to faithful souls?

But does not Peter possess princely authority among the disciples? and what are we to think of the claims of that mighty race of spiritual lords who base their pretensions to power upon the keys of St. Peter and the papal chair held by them in his name? The question divides itself into three, which can be met now only in a passing statement, instead of lengthened discussion. To establish the Roman papacy, three points must be proved: first, that Peter was raised to sovereign authority over other Apostles; secondly, that this authority was transmitted by him to successors; and lastly, that the succession was in the See of Rome.

Each of these positions we emphatically deny. We deny that Peter had sovereign authority over the other Apostles. He neither claimed such authority, nor was clothed with it by them. He calls himself simply an Apostle, and addresses his companions as fellow-elders; he gave his opinion in the primitive assembly on the same footing as the others, whilst Paul once withstood him to the face, and the recommendation of James was preferred to his own.

Nor did Peter bequeathe any sovereign authority to his successors. He did not, because he could not give what he never possessed. He did not, because his own express language forbids such a supposition, and he calls upon the ministers of the Church not to aim to be lords of God's heritage, but to be examples

of the flock, subject to Christ the chief Shepherd and Overseer of souls. He did not bequeathe such authority, because none such was exercised in the early Church, and the primitive overseers or bishops were simply first among equals, holding office with the consent of the people, calling none Master save the Son of God. If we were to look to any quarter for the first Pope, it would be to the successor of Jesus, — to James, who presided over the parent church of Jerusalem. But no such pretension is made from that quarter.

We are ready to say, then, that Peter could not transmit the papal succession to Rome. He had no such authority to transmit, — he did not transmit such to any one; and, moreover, there is no proof that he ever had any thing to do with founding or governing the Church of Rome. The most that can be regarded as probable is, that he was carried to Rome to suffer martyrdom. The bold statement common among Roman Catholics, that he was Bishop of Rome for twenty-five years, is a brazen fabrication, obviously. The New Testament is a self-evident refutation of this legend. The Epistle of Paul to the Romans is a tissue of contradiction, if written to the Roman Christians during the administration of Peter, making, as it does, not the least reference to him, nay, assuming that the Roman Church was without such guidance. And that Peter ruled after Paul wrote is a supposition that excludes the idea of Peter being the founder of the Roman Church, and leaves no time during that Apostle's life for a space of twenty-five, or any lengthened term of years. Paul was eminently the Roman Apostle, and if Peter, as the general tradition declares,

died with Paul at Rome, he was there to share a common martyrdom with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who had planted the Gospel, by himself or others, in the imperial city, and thus become the father of the Western Church at Rome, as Peter at Babylon was father of the Oriental Church. Peter's Epistle bears the date of Babylon, and it was very natural that from this date, although found in a century not symbolical like the Apocalypse, ere long the persecuted Christians would be glad to name Rome the persecutor the Babylon of the world. And in time, when the Roman Church grew into power, she would be glad to ascribe in honor the name once given in reproach, and feel a pride in exercising spiritual dominion from the imperial city once deemed the proud Babylon of the earth.

Would any one compare the spirit of St. Peter with that of his successors, let him compare Peter's own Epistle with any papal bull or encyclical letter. Let any candid man read over the encyclical letter of Pius the Ninth, that liberal and enlightened pontiff, as until of late he was deemed to be, to mark the resemblance between its doctrines and those of the Epistle of Peter. There is, I am ready to allow, much of true piety and charity in the document of Pius. Yet when we come to matters of dogma and authority, the contrast is almost ludicrous. How strong the contrast between the simple greeting, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered through Asia Minor: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied!" and the stately salutation of Pope Pius the Ninth, issuing his pontifical decrees from his central throne to his subject powers throughout the world! "Where

Peter is, there is the Church," says Pius, and Peter speaks through the Roman pontiff, and always lives and exercises judgment in his successors; "and therefore divine revelation is to be received in that sense which was and is held by this Roman See of the Blessed Peter." Contrast this language with Peter's free and pious words to all believers, both pastors and people: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Compare the Pope's closing appeal to the Virgin, the immaculate, sweetest mother, mediator, and advocate of us all, and the prayer to the saints in heaven, with Peter's simple farewell of "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus."

Surely, then, whether we consider the historical argument or the spirit of the man, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, a brother among brethren, was not Pope nor first of the Popes. He used his peculiar gift of executive ability, and took the lead in many of the early emergencies of the Church, and justified by his course all that his Master had said of him in the early days when faith of Christians appeared in its first enthusiasm and their energy in its undisciplined fervor. Yet notwithstanding this disclaimer, we are ready to allow the intimate connection between the name of Peter and the Church of Rome. That Church has

appropriated that theocratic spirit so prominent in his Judaizing days, and overlooked the enlarged liberty and charity of his matured experience. She has claimed to derive from him the keys, rather as he may have understood them in the twilight of his faith at Cæsarea Philippi than in the meridian of light that burst upon him from Calvary and Olivet and the great Pentecost. Hence the abominations that led Dominic to murder his fellow-men in the name of Peter and of Rome, and prompted Tetzels to sell absolutions as the merchant sells his merchandise, to the highest bidder. Hence the great reaction, — the Reformation that seized the keys in the spirit of the primitive keeper, and opened the Bible and the divine kingdom to every heart of faith and love.

What thoughts shall we bear with us now, as we part with the name of this powerful Apostle on our lips. He is the type of the strong man, — alike in his wavering and his constancy, his fall and his rise. As such look upon him and learn.

God has been pleased to endow some men with eminent executive ability, and they become, either for good or ill, the strong men of our race. Their strength gives them power, more power than comes merely from goodness or from wisdom not allied with active might. The strong man becomes the statesman, soldier, navigator, the doer of great things whether in peace or war, braving man or nature, serving gold or God. Strong in active force, he may yet be very weak and wavering in respect to the great good, and, like many of our noted men, the prey of vehement impulse without regulating principle, may be like the mighty Apostle in his vacillation and fall, without

sinking into his penitence and rising into his faith and devotion. Is there not a fatal element of moral weakness in our leading strong men, and in the chief thing do they not sadly fail?

We need the strong men on the right side. Alas! too often the strong are not good, and the good are not strong. How much of the masculine energy and executive talent of the world is utterly aside from religion, and, if not opposed to its principles, completely engrossed with material interests! Christianity needs the strong man, like Peter, as well as the mild, contemplative pietist, like John. The service of God is not complete unless offered by all the orders of mind and power which he has created. Our own type of religion has perhaps glorified too exclusively the meditative devotion of John and the reasoning faith of Paul, and slighted the genius of him to whose executive force our Lord especially committed the charge of his spiritual kingdom.

O men endowed of God with faculties of energy and enterprise! awake from your moral torpor, and do something for the kingdom of God upon earth. Lovers of things real, strive to realize or make real on earth the truths of God and eternity. Use your own minds and your own powers as you may think best, calling no man master, but looking solely to Him who is the Messiah of the Most High. Suspicious of mere dreamers, and determined to be doers, be not the vainest of dreamers by mistaking the evanescent for the eternal. Be doers of the word, realists in the noble sense of that glorious faith that came into this world to give God and heaven reality among men, to establish right principles, humane and pious affections,

and win man and the world to the service of Him of whom and through whom and to whom are all things.

So we may derive power from the man of the keys, not by prostrating ourselves before the papal chair, but by looking to him who gave the Apostle his faith and unction, and by asking, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Still then will the Apostle give light and power to the churches. Says one, whose poetry we like better than his creed concerning Peter:—

"Thus some fair star, on its ethereal way,
Seems gazing on the golden orb of day,
And drinks his radiance, till itself, made bright,
When the sun sinks, for others lights the night."

XII.

PAUL AND GOSPEL LIBERTY.

"WHERE the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." These words most eloquently express the principle of their author's life, character, and influence. They embody his darling sentiment, his characteristic idea. Where spiritual liberty was, either to proclaim her principles or to redress her wrongs, there was the heart and home of the Apostle Paul.

We have spoken of the preparation for the Messiah, of his coming, plan, ministry, and also of the service rendered by the most active and energetic of the original twelve Apostles. From Peter, the champion of unity and concentrated power, essentially the theocratic man, we turn to him who was the champion of mental freedom and universality, identified as much with Gospel liberty as St. John with Gospel love in the work of enlarging and liberalizing the primitive Church.

To find our man we must look to a singular quarter. For the lawgiver who led the old Israel from the land of bondage, we looked to the house of Pharaoh. Now, for the leader of the new exodus from Jewish exclusiveness to Christian universality, we enter the straitest sect of the Pharisees, and the most raging zealot in their councils is the man.

In sketching the career of an Apostle so familiar to our reading, we need use no more particularity than suffices to show the sequence of his labors and the connections of his history. Three words indicate his preparation for his work,—Tarsus, Jerusalem, Damascus.

Take first the central point, and look behind and before. Begin with Jerusalem, and then think of Tarsus and Damascus. In the city of David the Christian Church had its origin and the divine kingdom had its centre. There the Saviour held his last interview with his disciples, and there too from the unseen world gave them the first witness of his spiritual presence, and taught them thus to follow him as their heavenly prince, and live as under his ministering love. A great impression was forthwith made upon minds of all classes, alike upon the thorough-going Jews of the priestly and Pharisaic class, and upon the Hellenistic or Greek Jews, who had greater mental enlargement and superior intellectual culture. These Greek Jews, when converted, being more obnoxious to the priesthood on account of their somewhat Protestant spirit, were the first victims of persecution. Stephen was of this class, a Greek Jew, and to him belongs the glory of leading, next to Jesus Christ, his Master, the noble army of martyrs. When Stephen fell, his murderers, justifying their atrocity by the forms of law, laid their garments at the feet of a young man high in the estimate of the Pharisees, noted for his zeal as for his knowledge,—Saul.

Tarsus was his native home, a city that vied in its literary pretensions with Athens and Alexandria. There he had been educated in his childhood upon

the Jewish system, no stranger to Grecian refinement and Roman rights. In youth he was sent to one of the great theological schools of Jerusalem, and had for his master a man of very enlarged spirit and extensive learning. How from a mild and sagacious man like Gamaliel he should imbibe such a fanatical spirit, we cannot well see, unless it be that the very excellence and wisdom of his teacher bound him so strongly to his creed, that he went beyond the mark, and deemed himself bound to hate and persecute the enemies of the man whom he so loved, and the principles which he so revered, even as many nominal Christians of a later day have tortured and slain fellow-men from love of the Prince of Peace who thought it better to suffer than to inflict wrong.

Thus circumstanced at Tarsus, and thus disposed at Jerusalem, the young zealot determined to leave no stone unturned in the way of suppressing the odious heresy. To Damascus he hurried, with letters from the Sanhedrim commissioning him with full power to persecute all apostates from the law. On his way, we well know that he found far more than he sought. I will not review the various opinions entertained concerning these occurrences. The most obvious is the most reasonable. An influence from without and above him coincided with the workings of his own mind in his conversion. He knew more or less of Christian doctrine; he heard or heard of the preaching of Christ and the Apostles; he had been present at the death of Stephen; he had been struggling to find peace under the Jewish theocracy, and probably never found so little as when most maddened by bigotry. All experience shows that bigotry never

appears so violent as when first rebuked, and compunction of conscience gives just enough pain to spur the passions and not enough to subdue the heart. The zealot was honest, even an honest hater of heretics, and worthy of being an honest lover of all men. He who came to found the kingdom of his Father, he who gave his disciples at Pentecost a witness of himself, added another to his blessed works, and manifested himself to the persecutor in such a manner, that he fell to the earth in amazement, and the bigot of the Law rose up an humble believer in the Gospel. The work which the Saviour thus began was completed by one of the Christian brethren of Damascus, and the growing Church and the narrowing theocracy were startled at the tidings of this strange transformation. Such was Paul's training for his work at Tarsus, Jerusalem, and Damascus. Passing three years in Damascus and its neighborhood, partly in preaching, partly in study and meditation, he then returns to Jerusalem, and his great public mission begins. Dating his conversion in the year 35, we thus reach the year 38. Once more we name three cities, and thus simply designate the principal steps in the Apostle's career.

First comes Jerusalem. He who went from her gates to persecute the Christians returned after three years' absence to confirm their hearts and claim their communion. He met what he had reason to expect, fierce anger from the Jews, alike on account of his conversion and the very marked evangelic liberty of his doctrine. The Christians received him at first cautiously, doubtful of his sincerity, and hardly able to realize that so great a transformation could take

place, until assured by Barnabas of his zeal and devotion. Yet Jerusalem was not the place for him. It breathed far too much of the old theocratic spirit for his mind, now the more free on account of its recoil from Pharisaic rigidity. A voice called him to work in regions beyond party lines, and the vision in the temple coincided with his own yearning heart, and (omen of great events in the future) he turned towards the Gentile world.

Antioch now is the characteristic name. To this city the Apostle came, after a visit to Tarsus and the neighboring country of Cilicia. Antioch performed a most important part in the early development of the Gospel. It became the centre of missionary operations, the metropolis of the Gentile Christians, as Jerusalem was the mother church among the Jews. From this city Paul made his three great missionary journeys, during a period of about fourteen years, — the first journey being limited to Asia Minor, the last two extending into Europe, and carrying him to the chief cities of Greece. During this period he visited the churches within his sphere, planted the Gospel in new regions, wrote letters to various Christian communities, and exercised a powerful influence over the mother churches at Antioch and Jerusalem. We meet him after his first missionary journey at the apostolic council of Jerusalem, and there, as ever, his voice is for liberty of conscience and against the bondage of formalism. There Peter, lifted so gradually out of Jewish prejudice, stands side by side with this man so baptized by fire, and the two give their voice for the more liberal policy and principle. Time would fail us to sketch his labors in his more

extended missions, and graphic pens have been beforehand in portraying the striking contrasts between his spirit and doctrine, and those predominant in the splendid and corrupt capitals where he preached the Gospel of the Cross.

A new name now connects itself, and for ever, with Paul. His mission is to be identified with the Eternal City, and the wrath of enemies was overruled for good when he was arrested and sent prisoner to Rome. Even the more rigid of the Jerusalem Christians were suspicious of his course, whilst the rage of the Jews themselves was unbounded. But for the protection afforded him by the Roman governor, he might speedily have shared the fate of the victim of his own earlier bigotry, the martyr Stephen. Before the Sanhedrim, before Felix the governor and his successor, Festus, before Agrippa the king, he defended himself nobly, in a spirit blending at once the faith of the Christian, the patriotism of a Roman citizen, and the dignity of a man. Seeing the governor's policy likely to yield before Jewish fanaticism, he appealed to his Roman birthright, and to Rome and Cæsar was allowed to go. What men call imprisonment to him was emancipation, and from his somewhat easy bonds at Rome, he wielded an influence before which Cæsar's sceptre and cohorts seem as toys. If he did not found the Roman Church, he surely was its chief director, and thus the most protestant of the Apostles stands identified with the early history of that mighty hierarchy against which the great protest was made. Faithful to the last with pen and voice and spirit, he gave his blood as the seed of the Church. After probably a short release, he fell, among the victims of the

Neronian persecution, and left to the Church the legacy of a mind ever cherished and invariably restored to honor whenever spiritual despotism reappears and the champion of soul liberty is needed to encourage the hearts of its defenders. Thus, in successive steps, he fulfilled his course. Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, were the seats of his power. Though called last of all the Apostles, he was inferior to none of them, and from the very fact of his late and peculiar calling, he was especially fitted for his peculiar work.

We now speak of his characteristics, his mission and influence.

Like Peter, he was eminently an active man, but by no means so disposed to cling to a theocratic establishment, or so slow to adopt spiritual ideas. He moved altogether more in the realm of thought than the Apostle of the keys, and his activity was given more to the diffusion of just ideas than to the consolidation of ecclesiastical power. He went from ideas to institutions, as Peter from institutions to ideas. He was fond of arguing out the truth by ingenious reasoning, whilst John saw it with an intuitive wisdom. His passion was for truth, — and to comprehend truth in its length and breadth, to reconcile its apparent diversities into an harmonious system. This passion led him to be a strict Pharisee before his conversion, to subject all his thoughts to that intricate, yet somewhat consistent standard, and to force upon all others his own convictions. When persuaded of his error, and led to a far broader and more exalted view of God and salvation by the manifestation of Christ, he bore the same passion purified of its rancor to his new creed, and was always distinguished for his disposition to find

and give a reason for his doctrines and show the harmony of every statement with the general analogy of faith. He wrought into his reasonings the results of his own experience, and his doctrine of free grace and spiritual liberty is his own career translated into a general statement. Himself delivered from bondage to a minute ritual law by converse with an immortal being, who had been raised in glory after death upon the cross, — and exalted to a new and spiritual life by this event, and by his own antecedent preparation and subsequent reflection and experience, — what more natural than that the Apostle should constantly urge the doctrine of faith in that Divine being, whose death had dissolved all dreams of an earthly Messianic kingdom, and whose resurrection had established the spiritual nature of his reign, and the spiritual character of his religion? He himself found peace of mind, not by complying with any minute precepts of the law, not even by following the letter of the moral code, but by communion with one in whom perfect righteousness had been revealed in the life, and living faith in whom must ever impart a spirit that would be the strongest motive to duty and the highest consolation in sorrow and in view of death. Thus his doctrine of justification by faith came from his own experience, and illustrates at once the character of the man and the nature of his mission.

He had found peace, not by the written law, but in Him in whom that law was made life, and thus freed from Jewish formalism, he was peculiarly fitted to preach the Gospel to those Gentile nations who must accept the Gospel in its liberty or not at all, or who, having no Jewish creed to lean upon, were therefore

quite congenial with him who had such a creed and who had learned to lean on one above its letter. His mission it was to apprehend the Gospel in its universality, and, free from exclusiveness, to preach it to the nations as the religion of the human race. Called to preach a religion originating in Judea to the people of Greece and Rome, his birth in Tarsus gave him a Roman birthright, which enabled him to understand the genius of the Roman people; and the high Greek culture prevalent at Tarsus doubtless aided him in addressing to the Grecian mind the faith which his Jewish parentage and education had qualified him to understand in its Jewish connections, and which his conversion by a risen, immortal, and therefore spiritual Saviour had unfolded to his mind in its fulness and universality. He preached the Gospel in its depth and height, length and breadth, against Jewish narrowness, Pagan idolatry, and Oriental mysticism. The allusions, however, to Pagan and Oriental errors do not mark his Epistles so strongly as the reference to Jewish exclusiveness. His constant fear is, that his Gentile converts will not receive the Gospel in its simplicity and power, but will be held in bondage by the Law, as he constantly accuses the Judaizing converts of being held. Alike in its bearing upon the Jews and Gentiles, he aims in his chief Epistles, especially those to the Romans and Galatians, to urge the great principle of the Gospel, — justification not by works of the law, but by faith. Upon this principle his chief thought turned, and upon the proper interpretation of his meaning the most important part of controversial theology in ages since has rested. Understanding this, we understand the most perplex-

ing parts of the New Testament, and have a decided judgment upon the matters most vehemently discussed among the sects.

Taking the Apostle's own experience as our key, we have little difficulty in interpreting his theology. He states or implies two parties as ever in conflict within man, and insists upon one only way of reconciling them. The flesh and the spirit are always at war, — the flesh being regarded as not merely the sensual passions, but the whole department of our nature that tends to alienate us from God, — the spirit being regarded as not merely the higher elements in man, but also the direct influence of God. These tendencies are at war. What shall reconcile them and subdue the flesh to the spirit? He had an answer in his own emancipation from bondage. Not the law in its ceremonial, for he complied with its exactions even to the tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, yet had failed of peace; nor even the law in the letter of its moral precepts, for these rather convict a man of sin by telling him what he ought to be and do, than enable him to be and do what he ought. Not thus, but by standing upon an entirely new platform, must he find peace and be saved, — the platform of free grace and justifying faith. The grace or favor is free, because the gift of Christ and the Gospel is wholly free. The faith is justifying, both from the disposition in its subject and the foundation in its object. Its object is Christ, as the manifestation of the Divine truth and love, especially the death of Christ, the central point of his mission, and thus connecting itself with all that he taught and did alike before and afterwards. Such was the foundation of faith in respect to its object.

The disposition in its subject is equally obvious. The believer deemed himself justified by standing upon the true ground, and thus presenting himself before God in the right path. In the words of Dr. Wayland, "it places our moral nature in harmony with the moral character of God." He accepts the Divine mediation, and thus places himself in harmony with the Divine will, so that he depends no more upon himself, but upon the Divine love revealed in the Saviour. Emancipated from a burdensome code of traditions, he now looks to a spiritual head in allegiance, and walks in the liberty of the children of God. Errors and frailties he may have, yet his heart is in the right place, his faith upon the true foundation, and he can repeat the Apostle's words: "Wherefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

This doctrine of faith, instead of leading to neglect of good works, rather urged them as the necessary fruit of faith: for how could believers look in faith to the Saviour and not prove their faith by their works? Paul, indeed, insisted upon free grace through faith, and not by the Law; but not to do away the morality of the Law, but rather to fulfil its spirit by a filial disposition which the Law in its letter could never inspire. Met on every side by the champions of Pharisaic formalism, hunted from his conversion to his death by their rancor and bigotry, he never failed to point to the rock of reliance far beyond their traditions; and resting his faith there, he was prompted alike by love and opposition to celebrate the free grace that called

him to so great a redemption. Thus we have the key to his system. It pervades all his letters, is obvious in his merely personal epistles, clearer in those written to meet the wants and perils of particular churches, and forms the substance of those which, like the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, have been the great text-books in all ages in respect to the doctrines of faith and salvation.

Of the sources of his peculiar power we cannot be in any great doubt. First of all we must remember that he alone of the sacred writers loves the dialectic form, and aims to state the facts and principles of the Gospel in systematic order and logical connection. Moreover, he treats the whole subject of religion in a way especially adapted to meet the wants of those who are beginning and leading others to begin a religious life, herein differing from the other writers of the Epistles, whose aim is not so much to convert the worldly as to improve those already in the right path. In the third place, his labors, as well as his turn of mind, have made him eminently the Apostle and theologian of the whole Western world.

He has been the guiding spirit of Western, as John of Oriental theology. Menzel says beautifully, that the soul is the inward paradise, out of which the four sacred streams flow into the world. The first fountain is opened in the senses, the second in the will, the third in the feeling, and the fourth in thought. He maintains that in the development of our race each of these streams flows to a peculiar geographical region, — the senses to the South, feeling to the East, will to the North, and thought to the West. If such be the case, then European civilization, so blended of

Northern and Western influences, must be strongly characterized by the predominance of thought and will. Certainly we and our European kinsmen on the northern borders do abound comparatively in thought and will, and so far are ready to sympathize more heartily with the Apostle who unites such strength of will with acuteness of thought, than with the more mystical and contemplative character of a spirit like John. But apart from such considerations, Paul has a right from historical fact to be called the peculiar Apostle of the Western world. In his missionary journeys he gave Christianity to Europe, and combined the faith of the East with the force of the West. Revived in Augustine, the forms of his theology lorded it over European and Western churches for a thousand years. And when in the Roman Church a new and corrupt Pharisaism gained ascendancy and substituted for Christianity a new Judaism uniting the abominations of priestcraft with the nominal faith of Christ, the spirit of Paul revived in Luther; the Epistle to the Galatians, the sturdy old Reformer's darling book, brought to light with new force the neglected doctrine of justification by a living faith, rather than by rites and penances; and once more the spirit of the Apostle of the Gentiles broke the might of Jewish exclusiveness, and the Church built upon the earlier and afterwards abjured prejudices of Peter was shaken to its centre by the free Gospel of Paul. The controversy between the Jansenists and Jesuits turned mostly upon the interpretation of Paul, and the Apostle's spirit lived anew in the learning of Jansenius and the keen eloquence of Pascal. New England was founded in much of his spirit, and appealing

directly to God through Christ, the Pilgrims broke away from the Judaism of prelates like Laud and Hammond, and came in a courage resting upon a divine calling to these shores, here to plant the good seed that cannot die. His phraseology marks the whole tenor of our orthodox theology, and Edwards chief of all has connected a powerful metaphorical system with the Pauline letters. The liberal schools of divinity have not been backward to honor his name, timid although they sometimes have been in using that peculiar language which has been so often connected with doctrines never cherished by the Apostle.

Honor, all honor, to the Apostle of the Gentiles! Honor for his peculiar service to the Church in his own age, and also for his lasting office as the teacher of experimental religion, — the guide to struggling souls through conflict to peace! Logician as he was, and indefatigable in active zeal, he must not be regarded as lacking in profound or tender sentiment. His love for Christ was a passion of his soul, and the fervor with which he gave utterance to this feeling appears all the more touching from its union with a will so strong and an intellect so keen. His contemplations of Christ in heaven, of the grace of charity, of the immortal life, move him to bursts of lyric fire that blend much of the deep sentiment and tender pathos of John with his own earnest eloquence, and we forget the acute logician in the inspired prophet. It would be well if more regard were paid to the form in which the religious sentiment manifests itself in Paul, and if, without neglecting his doctrinal views, we contemplated them less as logical forms and more as

embodiments of his own fervent experience. The metaphysical portion of Evangelical theology would lose none of its depth, and gain much in power and interest, had it thus regarded the whole compass of the Apostle's mind.

Honor to the intrepid Protestant in the early struggles of the Christian Church with spiritual-despotism. Let him teach us evangelical freedom, and lead us to its source in evangelical faith. However we may pride ourselves on our philosophy, and be tempted to substitute for faith in Christ faith in human nature, we may remember that Paul too was something of a philosopher, and knew something of the spiritual elements of the soul; and yet he allowed nothing to separate him from the love of Christ or from the doctrine of the Cross.

Honor to him from us people of this new world in the West! When he turned his face from Antioch westward, he bore with him the seeds of civilization as well as religion. His visits to Europe, whether to Greece or Rome, made the era of European civilization, and prepared the influences that have given America her present character. Not in the discoveries of navigators or the victories of warriors, but in the life and labors of the Apostle of the Gentiles, we may read the best commentary upon Berkeley's famed words:—

“Westward the star of empire takes its way.”

That full and yearning heart followed an inspiration more profound than its own consciousness, and was preparing to do a vast work in a land to him unknown. People of this new world, be not faithless to

your great benefactor. How fondly, O our country, his soul would have responded to your pulses of freedom, whose heart was large as your domain, and whose will was strong as the flow of your many waters! Called to so great a heritage, use it worthily, and when the name of liberty is mentioned, forget not the essence in the name, — forget not what true redemption is, — forget not the heroic man who was free because obedient, and whose life, so spiritual and so reverential, ever repeated the word, “Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

Now, in the words of that ancient prayer, repeated for so many centuries, let us say: —

“O God, who through the preaching of the blessed Apostle St. Paul hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world, grant, we beseech thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto thee for the same by following the holy doctrine which he taught, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

XIII.

JOHN AND THE WORD.

HAPPY the man whose course knows no change but that of progress; whose life, like a fair river unstained by base soils, unbroken by treacherous shores, flows onward, wider, calmer, freer as it goes, more and more reflecting the bright heavens above in its waters, and bearing plenty, health, and energy on its tides.

We speak now of the Evangelist John, — of that life not stained, like Peter's, by treachery, nor broken, like Paul's, by bigotry, — of that disciple next the heart of Jesus, and best fitted alike from temper and experience to reflect the character of his Master.

They met for the first time on the banks of the Jordan, the one a seeker, the other the bringer of that Divine kingdom which the ascetic of the wilderness was so earnestly declaring as now at hand. What John the fisherman of Bethsaida was when that meeting took place, we may in general terms ascertain. He was a fervent member of the Jewish Church, — an eager expectant of the better day predicted by the Messianic prophets. Nurtured under the best influences of the ancient dispensation by a mother worthy of being named with the Marys and Annas

of the Gospel, on account of her piety and in spite of her ambition, he had not heard in vain the Psalms of David and the promises of Isaiah. He was looking for the true light, and rejoiced when it came, even in the dimmed ray of the Baptist's imperfect and merely preparatory word. When he met Christ, he gave himself to him with a love that never wavered. He believed. What he believed he probably was little able to express in logical propositions, for our deepest convictions defy definitions, and a true faith goes beyond all opinion. He believed in Christ as the promised Messiah. It was to be the aim of his companionship with Christ, to learn how much was wrapped up in that implicit faith, by learning what Christ was in his nature and what he was to his own soul. It was to be the work of his life, after that visible companionship ceased, to teach Christ to others and enrich others by the treasures of his own peculiar experience.

Pass now from the meeting to the parting, for we have few words of narrative now upon a topic best presented in the language of the Bible. They that met on the banks of the Jordan now part at the cross on Calvary. What is the disciple now. He is what those few years and that Divine Master have made him. He has had and still has his frailties. He has been sometimes impatient of delay, irritable under provocation, not indifferent to ambition. Yet throughout all, Jesus found him unfaltering in devotedness, or if the magnet within ever wavered, it was only as the trembling of the faithful needle that turns ever to its guiding star. He had been with Christ from the beginning of his ministry,—heard his words,

seen his works, imbibed his spirit, — in short, beheld him in all his triumphs and sufferings, present alike at the glorious transfiguration and at the bitter agony in Gethsemane, leaning on his bosom at the last supper, and faithful now at the cross. Rhetoric is tame in describing this parting scene. How can words surpass the disciple's own simple narration? "When Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." Thus the only one of the disciples present at the cross, and there honored with so sacred a trust, he was after the resurrection the first of the disciples at the tomb, and after the ascension second to none of them in zeal for the infant Church.

The New Testament does not give us any particulars of his subsequent career, after the first few years of his Apostolic work in and around Jerusalem. Yet there is significance in the very silence observed respecting his fortunes. He was not the executive will, like Peter, nor the controversial missionary, like Paul, nor the presiding overseer, like James. His power was more in his character than in marked specific acts; his influence, like that of the atmosphere, was in his very presence, and perhaps never more efficient than when not obtruded upon the notice. Yet who of us would not desire more light upon those years passed by the loved disciple in Jerusalem, — those years of devoted ministration and favored companionship, — years hallowed alike by scenes consecrated by the Master's labors and by the presence of the mother

who had watched over his infancy and stood by his cross?

One remark must here be made to explain the comparative obscurity of our Evangelist during some of the controversial years of the Apostolic Church. It was not his peculiar work to contend face to face with foes, nor was it even his favorite gift to convert the sinful. He was not a pioneer, like Paul, but rather fitted to labor in regions already subdued by a sterner will and prepared for the good seed. So gradual had been the development of his own mind, and so rich was his spiritual experience, that he seems chosen as the special representative of Christianity in its progressive holiness, rather than in its incipient repentance and reformation. His calling was not that of the revivalist so much as of the guardian and guide of a piety already awakened, a zeal already kindled.

The time came for the exercise of his peculiar gift in an illustrious sphere. Paul, the Apostle of conversion, the zealous missionary, so determined to preach to others the faith that had raised him from mental bondage, had planted churches in the West, and, having done his work, had gone to rest from labors where Jewish bigotry and Roman despotism could harm his peace no more. The seed that he had planted needed to be watched over by a select hand, and what more interesting and desirable than the fact that the disciple so mature in Christian experience should follow him, and John should turn his face westward, to preside from his post at Ephesus over the interests of the rising churches. So was it as if, after the Luther in the Apostolic band had pre-

pared the way, the Melancthon followed, and the zeal of the pioneer was succeeded by the fitting ministry of serene wisdom and watchful love.

Yet not without conflict and trial was John to pass his favored years. Savage persecutors came upon the Church, such even as the earlier martyrs had never known, and the deliberate vengeance of an emperor plotted the ruin of a faith, before assailed chiefly by the rage of a sect or the passions of a mob. When persecution abated, the war of opinion made assaults quite as perilous, and the fidelity proof against threats was endangered by subtile speculations, as the stout tree which defies the tempest is gnawed and crumbled by insects, or killed by the sharp knife that girdles its trunk and severs its vital ducts. Here was work indeed for the Evangelist to do, to keep his own spirit true and carry forward the life of the churches in a position so endangered. Nobly he showed the difference between the weak and miscalled amiability that leaves evil unrebuked and the heroic love that is willing to inflict a wound to cure a greater ill and to speak an unwelcome truth to check a fatal error. All that remains to us of the Evangelist's composition is to be regarded as the expression of his mind during his ministry at Ephesus and the vicinity. Here we break from our narrative of events, and appeal to the works that best illustrate the man and the age, — the mystical Apocalypse and the fourth Gospel.

Would we understand the eventful scenes into which St. John was ushered by his position in Asia Minor, turn first to the Apocalypse, for this is indicative of existing events, as the fourth Gospel is expressive of prevalent opinions. The first we ascribe to

the earlier, the latter to the later part of his sojourn in Asia Minor; for this statement we have the testimony of the greatest recent scholars,—Ewald, Lücke, De Wette, Reuss, Neander, Stuart,—who firmly ascribe the Apocalypse to a year shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem. The Apocalypse,—the book of Revelation, upon which so many commentators have perilled, and not a few lost, their sanity,—what shall we say of that book of enigmas? * We have no new interpretation to propose, no far-fetched parallels between the dark imagery of its visions and the events of history. We are as little disposed to agree with Mede and Bengel, Croly and Barnes, in finding all past and future developments of Christendom in its scenic pages, as we are inclined, with the more lax of the German scholars, to regard it simply as a poem descriptive of past events. To be understood, the Apocalypse must be considered as the voice of its age, the age of the great Neronian persecution, and written just after the Church had been agonized by the martyrdom of its noblest confessors. The spirit that of old had appeared in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, to solace the faithful in dark times by promise of a better day of triumphant innocence and retributive justice, reappeared in the Christian Israel, and by very

* Said Scaliger: "Calvin showed his wisdom in letting the Apocalypse alone."

This present century is prolific in explanations more apocalyptic than the original. The author of one of the last commentaries that come to us says, that after nine years' thinking he has hit upon the discovery that the first beast is the *ΦΡΗΝ*, or mind considered as a whole, or as comprehensive of all its faculties of sensation, intellect, and volition, and is at once the shadow of spirit and dependent upon flesh for its nature and manifestations.

general consent the prophetic mantle fell upon John the Evangelist, who is generally deemed the author of the Apocalypse. If not written by him, but by a pupil of the same name, as some say, it still bears the impress of his mind, and speaks the voice of his age. Following the weight of evidence, we shall treat it as his own composition. The purpose of the book is obvious. It is addressed to the leading churches of Asia Minor, to warn them of their moral dangers, and encourage them to persevere, by a graphic presentation, in the poetic form usual with the prophets, of the final triumph of Christianity over all dangers and all foes. Not in the far East and at the court of the Chaldean, but in the West, on the borders of Europe, under the shadow of dreaded Rome, the new Daniel penned the revelations that rose before him as he considered the perils of Christendom. His thoughts took the Oriental garb, and come to us in imagery in great part borrowed from the usages of the Old Testament; and they who read the Apocalypse without considering this fact, and interpret every figure in its literal and prosaic signification, are as wise as they who should regard day and night as living existences, or the orbs of heaven as having voices, because the Psalmist says that "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth forth knowledge," and summons sun, moon, and all the stars of light, to praise the Creator God. Following the most enlightened Biblical scholars, we regard the Apocalypse as a highly wrought descriptive and prophetic vision, in which many things past appear as present, and things future in their general outlines are anticipated. Thus viewed, it is full of power and beauty, and its imagery has a

grandeur of which Milton and Dante might be proud. The prologue is a direct appeal to the chief churches of Asia Minor; then follows a vision of heaven and the Divine throne, in imagery manifestly borrowed from the sanctuary of the Jewish temple. Before the Most High lies the book whose seals all the heavenly host are vainly invited to loose, until the Son himself steps forward to the task. Then the celestial choirs join in an anthem of thanksgiving, and the unsealing begins. All that follows is but the unsealing of the book. In solemn succession the seals are broken, and shapes ominous appear; the four riders, victory, war, famine, pestilence, attended by death, — the company of martyrs inquiring for protection and justice, — then fearful signs among the elements, and the selection of the faithful from the Jewish nation. With the opening of the last seal the breath is suspended in anxiety for the final catastrophe, and silence reigns in heaven; but the curse is still delayed, whilst in succession seven trumpets are sounded and new developments appear, all expressive of woes. The writer appears as if living at the point of time indicated by the seventh trumpet, all events previous being but a graphic recapitulation. At the seventh trumpet we again expect the final catastrophe, and again it is delayed, whilst the seer contemplates the enemies to be encountered. These foes are three, a dragon, type of the Satanic power, and two monsters obviously representing the political tyranny and idolatrous superstition of Rome, or the Roman state and church. After some further preliminary symbols, the various stages of the conflict are described, and in succession the seven vials of wrath are poured forth. The victory is

complete. The three foes are defeated. Rome is in ruins. The Pagan throne and priesthood fall, and to crown the whole, the monster of evil himself is chained, and at last he is, after temporary sway, utterly subdued. Then begins a golden age on earth, to be succeeded in time by a thorough renovation that shall make earth and heaven new. God shall dwell in full communion with man, Paradise shall be restored, the waters of a new Eden shall roll their crystal tides, and the tree of life, that beautiful image in the first book of the Bible, reappears in more glorious bloom and richer fruit in this closing vision of the seer of the New Jerusalem.

Thus viewed as a symbolic statement of the developments of Christianity in conflict with the world, this mystical book has great force and signification. It interprets the age in which St. John was called to his trying position in Asia Minor, and the seer of Patmos is an indispensable witness to the state of things in his time. The aim which he set to himself was justified by the result. Desponding hearts were comforted, and Christianity did indeed triumph over its foes. He who was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and whose name was the Word of God, did conquer. The end is not yet. Without favoring the doctrine that expects minute historical fulfilments of the Apocalyptic language, we accept its leading principles, and regard the whole future in the light of that invincible hope that pervades the visions of the seer. The heart of John cherished that hope in the troubled world in which he moved, even they must believe who ascribe the authorship of the book to a follower of his name. It is the great Vision of Judg-

ment, the symbolic epic of the triumphs of the Cross over Jewish bigotry, Roman despotism, and, lastly, over some new hostile host in years then future about to invade the Church.

As the Apocalypse presents St. John in relation to the events, the fourth Gospel exhibits him in relation to the doctrines and life of his age.

To that Gospel we now turn, and we pass at once from the realm of conflict and trouble into the upper region of light and peace. We will not stop to meet objections to its genuineness drawn from its peculiar style of thought and expression, nor to prove that a mind like John's must needs understand Christ better than his associates, and that his intellect and opportunities enabled him to comprehend and guide the best thinkers of his age. To the Gospel we look without further delay. Many years have passed in the interval,—years of vast change among the nations, of great vicissitude in the Apostle's own life and condition. Jerusalem has been laid waste and her people scattered. Christianity has made great progress in the world, and the danger now is not so much that its assemblies will be deserted, as that men will crowd into them with their passions unsubdued, their errors of opinion retained, and that heathen sensualism and false philosophy will appropriate to themselves the Christian name. One only of the original disciples remains. A great work is given to the aged overseer of the Ephesian church to do, and how nobly he did it, let the last and greatest of the Gospels prove. It is a statement of Christianity in its universal principles and permanent bearings, addressed,—not, like Matthew's Gospel, chiefly to Jews,

nor, like Mark's, to the Romans, nor, like Luke's, to Greeks,—but to Christians of every land and age, presenting to them the work of Christ in its highest and broadest interpretation. He begins his record of the Gospel revelation with a statement of the origin and nature of the revealing power or Word. Truly, as says Jerome, “his Gospel differs from the rest. Like an eagle he ascends to the very throne of God, and says, In the beginning was the Word.” It is divided into two parts, with a proem or introduction and a conclusion. The first part, reaching through the twelfth chapter, describes the work of Christ's ministry, presenting such facts only as are necessary to illustrate leading principles. The second part treats of Christ's glorification, first in the power of faith and love within his own soul in the midst of trial, and then in the exaltation through his death and resurrection.

The proem or introduction has been most in controversy, and has been so much used as the battleground of the sects, that comparatively few seem to ascend and enjoy that hill of peaceful and commanding vision to which it calls us. Hundreds of folios have been written to explain its references to the philosophy of the time, and much has been well written upon the subject. Few words, however, are needed in order to explain its leading idea of the Word, which makes all else plain. What more appropriate than that, in a work designed to set forth the authority of Christ as the revealer of the Divine mind, the writer should begin by setting forth the nature of the revealing power, in contrast with the absurd and intricate notions of Divine emanations taught by the theorists of the day? In order to derive the world, with its

mingled good and evil, from God, without compromising the Divine immutability and perfections, theorists had asserted the existence of an intermediate power or Logos, from whom creation emanated. The Evangelist cuts off the head of such theories by one central truth, favored at once as he was by the readings of the Old Testament and the highest Platonic philosophy. He traces all revelation up to a revealing power, — all inspired words up to one inspiring Word. That Word is the Divine mind in its expression or power of manifestation, and not any secondary being or derived power. By this the worlds were made, for God spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. All things created are thus expressions of the creating mind, words of the creative Word. The advent and mission of Jesus was the crowning expression of the Divine mind. He, more than the earth and the heavens, showed forth the glory of the Father. Thus by eminence he was the Word, — the great manifestation of God. If we would know the Father, we must seek him in the Son. Well might St. John say, "And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He is the way to true life, and that life is the true guide; or in him was life, and the life was the light of men, having affinity with that divine ray in every soul which ever needs brightening, while in some measure it lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Do any ask our view of the precise doctrinal bearing of this noted passage? We find in it nothing of what controversialists call doctrine, nothing of Athanasian metaphysics or Socinian subtilty. It states neither that Christ is the second person among

three persons who are one, nor that he is merely a man like ourselves. Its aim is to show, that in him the Word of God so appeared, that God was declared or revealed by the Son. It is the familiar Scripture doctrine of God in Christ, not the human theory that Christ is God. We like the name of a recent noted book of theological discourses, — their name and their spirit too. The volume would have been unexceptionable if the idea of the title had been carried through the book, and the divinity of the Saviour been expressed by the Scriptural terms "God in Christ." Upon those terms and the truth back of them, Christians are meeting and will meet in new charity, and the opening words of this Gospel, too often the rallying-cry of sects, will be confessions of faith and love.

Beautiful introduction to this precious Gospel, with its narrative of events, each of which teaches some universal truth; with its discourses and prayers, that come as from the gate of that heaven into which its closing chapters usher the Son of God! Well may commentators call it the heart of Christ, the permanent Gospel, written as by an angel's pen. None has spoken more heartily than Matthias Claudius: "Most dearly of all do I love to read in St. John. In him there is something so entirely fascinating, — twilight and night, and through them the lambent, flashing lightning! A soft evening cloud, and behind the cloud the great full moon itself! Something so pensive and exalted and full of yearning, that one cannot tire of it. In reading John, it is always as if I saw him before me leaning on his master's bosom at the last supper, as if his good angel stood by me and in certain passages would fall upon my neck and speak

in my ear. I do not understand all that I read, but often it is as if his meaning floated in the distance before me, and even when I look into some dark place, I still have a presentiment of a great, majestic meaning, which I shall one day understand."

Not always, indeed, in the poetical light of this devout German, but always in like attractiveness, the image of St. John has been cherished by Christians of every age. His name is immortal, identified with that of his Master, as the alabaster vase with the ointment which it treasures, or as the memorial tablet with the greatness which it commemorates. Still our debt is not paid to the memory of the loved disciple, and his character needs more careful appreciation. The heart of Christ is nearer us, as we better know the heart that was next his own.

Too often the amiability of this disciple has been celebrated at the expense of his manliness, and he has been held up to admiration too exclusively as a character of passive good-will. Sometimes this view becomes almost a caricature, and he who so tempered energy with kindness, the son of thunder who became the disciple of love, is portrayed almost as an effeminate sentimentalist. His nature was full of warmth, and this was made a genial flame instead of a devouring fire. The longer he dwelt with Jesus, the more effectually his nature was refined, and his heat tempered and exalted into that mild and glowing love of God and man which emanates from his Gospel and Epistles, into that heavenly communion of which the Last Supper was an undying pledge. If ever in maturer years any trace of his early impatience appears, and the harmony of his spirit for a moment yields, the

discordant note may be traced to grief at the blindness and hatred of the world towards Him who came to be its light and life, — never to merely personal considerations. His character is surely far more interesting from his union of high spirit with devoted love. His goodness came not from want of passion or sensibility, but from the power of an engrossing faith and the life of a guiding love. To understand St. John, borrow an illustration from the name given him in his young days by his Master. The Son of Thunder was so impetuous, that, when the Samaritans rejected the Saviour, he wished that fire might come from heaven and destroy their city. Here is an electric spirit unbalanced, lightning within in affinity with the lightning which it would evoke from the clouds. Pass on a few years, and contemplate that same man at the Last Supper, — follow him to Ephesus, to Patmos, nay, to that sacred old age, when all he could say to his people was but to tell them to love. Where was the lightning then, — its power annihilated, or its forces balanced and controlled? Or in other words, does goodness weaken the character, or strengthen it? does it consist in the annihilation of natural forces, or their true balance upon principles of everlasting right? Let the element which furnished the name for this loved disciple afford the illustration of the change in his character. When clouds vanish, the winds cease, and lightnings flash no longer, no power is destroyed; the elements that made the storm are balanced, and the fiery bolt was but an irregular action of a force omnipresent, and coexistent with life itself. Yes, in every cup of water given in the name of a disciple, there is enough of latent lightning, or elec-

tricity, if let loose, to lay waste a city, and in every dew-drop enough to arm the storm with a fiery shaft. God in nature should teach us to understand that the balance of power in its serenity and peace is not the annihilation, but the intensity, of its force, and that the moral equilibrium of a true life is the greatest exhibition of moral energy.

He who would once blast the Samaritans with fire, learned a better use of power through a nobler flame. How beautiful the force of his character appears in the incident so often told of his adventure with the banditti, whom, after they had seized him, he asked to lead him to their captain; and this master-robber, at sight of the old man whose instructions he had enjoyed in days of innocence, wept like a child, and returned to the fold which he had so basely deserted. At first the robber-chief fled from the Apostle's sight. "Why flee from me, my child, thy father, an unarmed old man? Fear not, there is still hope for thee. I will be surety for thee to Christ. Believe, he hath sent me." In these words was a power above any despot's word or soldier's steel.

To such a moral combination of spirit with mildness, fervor with humility, St. John added peculiar intellectual traits and practical faculties. He was by eminence an intuitive mind, seeing into things themselves, rather than receiving his conclusions as the results of elaborate reasoning. His imagination also was intuitive as his reason. He looked upon the world of spiritual truths as we look upon the scenes of nature, and these truths, like the scenes of nature, clothed themselves in peculiar imagery, and appeared in expressive combinations whenever sight yielded to

fancy, or imagination worked upon the materials gathered by the perceptions. The Apocalypse may consistently be regarded as the work of his intuitive imagination, — the Gospel as the work of his intuitive intellect, and the graphic imagery of the one and the clear statement of the other indicate but the various action of the same master mind upon divine truths. For his loving heart, but not for that alone, did Jesus love him. The disciple's mind was congenial with that of Christ, and he was eminently a man of interior vision, and won the blessing promised them who could believe without seeing, through that intuitive faith which is evidence of things not seen.

Would we understand this intellectual trait? Compare it with its opposite, the merely logical mind, which believes only what can be reasoned out, and which without borrowing aid from intuition becomes an absurdity, for how can we reason out any thing unless we start from some principles of reason? How can we reason about causes, rights, truths, without some primal ideas of cause, of right, of truth? A mere logician is an understanding without a soul, — a form of reasoning without reason; although logic is a good servant of intuition, and reasoning in form is an essential of reason in its life. Intuition* presents the idea immediately, logic represents it mediately. Intuition is spontaneous, logic reflective. Intuition deals with the substance, logic with the forms of things. Intuition unites, logic separates. Intuition seizes general ideas, logic individual cases. Intuition is progressive, ever seeing more of divine truth;

* See a clear development of these distinctions in Morell's *Philosophy of Religion*, Chapter II.

logic is fixed, or moves no step unless intuition has shown the way. Logic deals with words, intuition with the Word. The favorite disciple in the school of Christ was fitly an intuitive mind, eminent for this power, as Paul for his logical tendency, and Peter for his executive talents. All had their place; but we agree with the Master in assigning the most honored place to the mind of St. John. He exhibits Christianity on its best ground. He states its historical facts, and traces out their connections and conclusions indeed, yet even in his historical record he constantly points out to us the moral and spiritual principles that must be received by the soul on their own evidence through experience of their living power. These principles are features, elements of the Divine Word, and that action of the soul which accepts them is the action of faith. Faith, — sacred word! — sadly abused indeed, confounded with blind credulity and dark superstition, yet itself the very spirit of light. We will abide by the loved disciple's definition, although it may condemn our own worldliness. He that believeth is not condemned. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil." The interior eye opened to the light, — this is faith.

Many, many thoughts crowd upon us, as we leave this topic, and close our survey of the ministry of Christ, in its preparation, plan, work, and chief instruments. Yet one thought is most prominent, — one never to be separated from the life that has been so cursorily reviewed in this essay. A character, by no means, indeed, devoid of native graces, here appears

transformed, invigorated, exalted, by the power of a divine companionship. The sincere, earnest, but narrow Jew, takes with gladness the citizenship of the new kingdom, and in a faith without measure, a love without limit, does his work in the world. The yearning of his own soul led him to the divine reality to which that yearning calls; his heart found the God for which it was created in Him whom God sent to be its way; and he has left open for us the path which his own feet trod, whilst words of ineffable tenderness and majesty invite us to follow. Choicest treasure of the past, — best gift of Heaven to man, — Christ presented to us in the spirit and life by one who knew him best! — the Christian Plato presenting to us the greater than Plato's master, that greatest of philosophic men! Socrates reasoned of God, whilst John leads us to Him in whom was God's Word. That narrative sparkles and glows with light and love. Let it not be a dead record to us. Even the dust of the catacombs contains germs that may still be quickened and live, and corn and flower-seeds taken from the ghastly wrappings of mummies buried before Abraham's day, bloom and bear flowers or fruit. And shall the good seed of the Eternal Word be as dead to us? No! receive it in a true spirit and life, a genuine faith.

What is our faith? Think it not enough reply to say what traditional opinions we habitually sanction, or what usages we indolently favor, — what words we repeat, or what stories we hear. What is our real faith? What moral and spiritual realities do we accept? Answer with all our powers, all our tastes, affections, conscience, and will. In things beautiful

we believe, — what of the Divinity, whose perfection wears the infinite beauty? Things true we recognize, — what of Him in whom truth has its being? Things good we acknowledge, — what of Him who is the life of goodness, the All-Holy? What is our faith in God, — what our relation to Christ as the great revelation, *the Word of God*. If life is not darker than the gloom of the grave, can we not in some feeble measure say of ourselves, “We too have beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”?

More of the life brightened by this light we need. That life has never wholly ceased, nor that light been darkened. In every century exalted men have given their minds to its illustration, and faithful Christians to its practical interpretation. No minds have better sympathized with St. John than those who have lived in our age, no more fervent response than that given by the noblest minds in our modern philosophy has been given to the word of the inspired seer on the *Ægean coast*. We have been contemplating the last of the Apostles, and we take leave of the Apostolic time with the form of an old man before us, who so celebrated the light and love of God on that Asiatic shore, where, centuries before, the greatest of heathen bards sang of war and dominion, in his old age swaying men at will by his magical harp. What a topic is this, — Homer and St. John, as imagination presents them after lives so illustrious, and on the verge of graves so honored! It is enough to name them now. Both men have had response from all ages since. Let them have it evermore. Let the day come, however, when the seer of Patmos shall win to his own spirit

the muse of Homer, and the lays of heroic daring shall be chanted in honor of heroic devotion, not of rapine and blood; when the strong shall not contend for the wrong, but give their weight to the cause of the right; when the sons of thunder, without losing their fire, shall refine and exalt its flame, until it shines and burns with the light and love of cherubim and seraphim.

XIV.

THE DISCIPLES AND THE UNSEEN WITNESS.

WE present our topic most appropriately by recurring to the Christian Pentecost, — a season rich in historical associations as in sacred influences, at once a monument and a milestone, speaking to us of our journey onward and of those who have already gone before in the appointed way. Shunning the ready temptation to enter into the antiquities of the subject, we go at once to the main point and treat the question, “What is there especial under the Christian dispensation in the giving of the Divine Spirit, or the witness of God and heavenly things to man?”

To see the point more clearly, we will try to enter into the position of some thoughtful person present at the remarkable scene recorded in the second chapter of the Book of the Acts. Jerusalem was full of devotees during that season, especially of residents abroad who came to refresh their faith and perhaps their friendships at the old shrine, from quarters as remote as any that Cæsar had subdued to Rome in the West of Europe, or Alexander to Greece in Eastern Asia. It might be interesting to imagine the thoughts and feelings of some fair-minded Israelite, whose mind had been stimulated by contact with foreign manners

and religions, as he came home once more, and listened to the disciples of the new prophet of Nazareth, who presumed to place him above Moses even during the feast of the Lawgiving. But we gain better insight into the occasion by considering the position of one of the more active persons of the scene, one whose history and habits of thought we know with some fulness, — the Evangelist St. John.

He had been to that festival many times before, but never with such feelings as now. All the moral power that the essential principles of the old dispensation had for him, they had now; yet he came looking for something far more than they expressed, whatever they might imply. In his youth he had come up repeatedly to Jerusalem to keep the great feast, which celebrated at once a thanksgiving for the earth's first fruits and for the revelation of the Mosaic law. He could still enter into the spirit of this festival.

To him still the first fruits of the earth were expressions of the Divine bounty. To a mind like his there was still a signal beauty in the offerings from the wheat-harvest at the altar of God. He could join in the psalm of praise to the Creator: —

“Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving;
Sing praise upon the harp unto our God:
Who covereth the heaven with clouds,
Who prepareth rain upon the earth,
Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.
Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!
Praise thy God, O Zion!
For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates;
He hath blessed thy children within thee.
He maketh peace in thy borders,
And filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.”

In this psalm he could have joined, yet he looked

for a witness of God far more full than that of the descending rain and the upspringing verdure.

As a receiver of the Law, he too could devoutly commemorate its anniversary, and with the great company of worshippers praise God as King as well as Creator.

"Sing unto God, sing praises unto his name!

Extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name Jah,
And rejoice before him!

The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God;
Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel."

But in a revelation more deep and full than that of Sinai, the Evangelist believed, and was waiting that his faith might be confirmed by some token from Him who a few days before had gone from his followers to the unseen world. He had been with Jesus of Nazareth from the beginning of his ministry, acknowledged him as the Messiah, the Son of God, and heard from his lips these words of promise on the evening before he followed him to the Cross: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

In a measure that promise had been fulfilled. The crucified arose,—the departed returned. But after a few weeks he disappeared, and in visible presence the Master was no more with his disciples, and by that loss their hold on heavenly things was sadly enfeebled. Was this all? was his memory to be the promised Comforter? This was not all. The startling facts of Pentecost opened a way of com-

munication between the Master and the disciple, between the invisible world and the visible, which has never since been closed. I will not try now to cut to the quick the several parts of the narrative, but simply urge the main point. In some way, and in a supernatural manner, the Christian assembly were moved by a peculiar influence, that brought them into new union with each other and with God, and led them to think of Christ as the procuring cause of the blessing. It was the founding of the Christian Church, — the sealing of the new dispensation by the appointed witnesses.

What view we are to take of the event may best appear by considering what view they took of it who were most nearly concerned. The disciples were not philosophers; and they had no favorite theory of the connection between matter and spirit, between the visible and the invisible world, to assert or abandon. They had been brought up to believe in the God of their fathers, and in the reality of the future state. But God was to them hidden or darkened by the letter of their law, and the future state was a vague and cheerless world of shadows. That pure and majestic being who had brought the Father so near to their affections, and revealed to them the heavenly world so fully by his word and work, was now no more with them. Waiting, meditating, they felt themselves moved, penetrated, by a strange and mighty influence. Their view of it was at once clear. It came from Him who had gone to the Father, and it was to them evidence of his love and a witness of the union between him and themselves. Thenceforward the walls of separation were thrown down; the

Divine kingdom was indeed established; heaven was indeed opened, and the living witness of it was now within their souls. The Spirit of Truth had come from the Father through the promised Mediator, and its peace could not be taken away.

What had produced this result? Obviously two parties concurred in the work. They, the disciples, had part in it in themselves, for they were in a peculiarly earnest frame of mind, and not in vain had they been trained by that Divine Teacher. Was not the influence which they felt the natural result of their own dispositions,—an emotion excited by peculiar circumstances, and thus wholly the impulse of their own hearts? More than this we must believe, or else make their experience an exception to the general plan of Providence. Even our natural emotions are not self-developed, but are called forth by the presence of their natural objects. The spiritual emotions from like reason must be regarded as under the influence of their peculiar objects; and what, under the Christian dispensation, is the peculiar object of devout emotion, but God as revealed in his elect image, in the mission of the chosen Messiah? The mission of Christ was mature, his work consummated, only after his ascension. Such was his express declaration. Then only were they rightly to contemplate his own person,—then only was he to be in a position to win the promised spirit for them. Their preparation of mind was one element in the event experienced; but another element was needed, and this need was met by an especial communication of Divine influence to them. The Spirit of Truth was to be with them, even within them, yet not of them, but from the Father in the promised way.

Such is our view of the first Christian Pentecost, as an outpouring of the Divine Spirit, virtually a new lawgiving, a sacred confirmation of the word of Him who came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. At such a time remarkable external phenomena might be expected, for it was indeed a new moral creation, — an opening of heaven and God to men as well as an opening of men to heaven and God. It was the inauguration of the Christian kingdom on earth, — a kingdom whose essential law was to remain after the peculiar circumstances of its inauguration ceased. It was an expressive sign indeed, that the souls of those present were so opened to each other, that all understood the Gospel preached, each as in his own speech, and that they who were to bear the everlasting word to the nations should be designated by tongues of flame.

The transient occurrences must be distinguished from the permanent truths connected with the occasion. Every great cycle in the order of Providence is ushered in by remarkable events; and principles afterwards work in quiet, which were introduced in storm and fire. There are convulsions in nature in the great periods of her changes, — convulsions in society in the rise of new dynasties and the development of new powers. The giving of the law on Sinai was with cloud and tempest and fire, and the code thus solemnly consecrated afterwards became the established faith of Israel, bringing peace to her homes and palaces. To gather a lasting lesson or educe a permanent influence from the first Christian Pentecost, we need no more ask to have those peculiar circumstances repeated, than we should ask that the events of the American Revolution which attended the rise of our

national institutions should be repeated every time a new citizen is received or a new administration inaugurated. Nay, we should no more ask that every Christian experience should repeat the miracle of Pentecost, than ask that Sinai should thunder every time a child first learns the ten commandments, and thus the Mosaic law is enacted anew. All periods of creation have their signal marks, and after the new order is established a regular law of cause and effect appears.

But the promise was that the predicted witness, the Spirit of Truth from the Father, should remain. And it has remained, confirmed by the voice of ages, and by every Christian experience. The door then opened in the heavenly world has been kept open, and divine influence has ever been given as declared. That witness of God, of Christ, and of the eternal life has never been withdrawn. Men have tried to argue it down, and to sin it away, but in vain. All their infidel shrewdness, all their earth-born philosophizing, has been strangely baffled by the Spirit in man that still bears witness of things unseen, and in every age the mouths of conspicuous scoffers have been closed by the force of this very evidence working within themselves, allying itself with what is divine in reason and conscience. This witness has been in Christendom, and is now, in a manner that no creeds can define, and to an extent which no bigotry can bound. There may be various theories of the nature of the Spirit, and also of the method of its coming. Some may call it a third person in the Godhead, and others, like ourselves, in a simpler faith, may deem it the breath of God, the Spirit of the Most High; yet the real marks of its

influence are still the same, for it still speaks within the soul, of God the Heavenly Father, and of Christ the Divine Image and the appointed Way. About methods of winning the heavenly witness men may dispute. "It is here," say thousands, "and here alone, — alone in the line of our favorite creed of substitution and imputation; for how can man," asks the Calvinist, "receive this mark of God's love, unless some holy one bears his pains for him, and lends his righteousness to him?" There it may be, but not because of that creed; there it is surely, if the soul in any way has been reconciled to God by the Saviour, and known the sentiment of true reconciliation.

"It is here, and here alone," say millions of another stamp, — "alone under the seal of baptism and the bread of communion as administered by elect hands, able to impart the seed of regeneration and the food of angels." There it may be, but not there alone, nor because of any priestly prerogative. There, if at all, because Christ has been received in a far nearer sense, and the witness of reconciliation has been his cleansing and nurturing word.

Under all forms of faith, and in all ages of the Church, the essential of Christian experience is the same. Its essential consciousness is the sense of reconciliation with God. Its essential form is Christ by his mission and spirit reconciling God with man. Its essential fruit is piety and charity. Mediately and immediately the witness is won; mediately through all the agencies of example, advice, sacred literature, the influence of the Church, and all the institutions that are in the least imbued with Christianity; immediately by

all acts of the soul or graces of heaven that bring man into direct communion with God. Both aids we need, — all that the wisdom, piety, and charity among men can do, and all that our own presence at the mercy-seat can do, to keep the heavenly influence thus far granted, and to open to us still more largely the sources of blessing.

Such do we deem to be the truth regarding the promised Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, to the Christian. Believing thus, we have faith at once very enlarged and very specific.

It is enlarged. It excludes no other evidence in its zeal for its own peculiar gift. It accepts the witness of nature and the testimony of the law, nay, confirms and completes them both. How nature is interpreted by a reasonable communication of the mind of its Lord, — how creation is transfigured by a fuller expression of the spirit of its Creator, as that Creator is presented by his chosen Son! The yearly festival of the Paraclete has always been a time of rejoicing in the beauty and plenty of the earth. The faithful have looked upon this beautiful season with a deeper joy from believing in a Word less evanescent than the withering grass, and in a spirit that views things visible as the vestibule of the kingdom not seen and eternal. The true man will allow no artificial relations, no walls, although of gold, no exemption from the lot of the tiller of the soil, to shut him out from direct relations with nature, whether in its smiling landscapes or its fruitful fields. The book that God gave him to read, he will read, and the book outspread to his gaze will never fail to stir the spirit within to new faith and praise. To him nature will be more

and more a witness of God. Indeed, is it not true, that Christianity has created the true poetry of nature, and given the landscape its true interpretation to the artist, and ocean and stars their true voice to the poet? In what school have the Spensers and Miltons, the Herberts and Wordsworths, learned to look through nature to its God, and catch gleams of the interior glory through this screen before the shrine? Who speaks this truth better than that pure and gifted poet, who in calm and happy old age has of late gone from the world, as years ago, in the gladness of the May season of the Christian Pentecost, he wrote his Ode on Immortality?

“And oh, ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
 Think not of any severing of our loves!
 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
 I only have relinquished one delight
 To live beneath your more habitual sway;
 I love the brooks which down thy channels fret
 Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
 The innocent brightness of a new-born day
 Is lovely yet;
 The clouds that gather round the setting sun,
 Do take a sober coloring from an eye
 That hath kept watch o’er man’s mortality.
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

The Law he will not reject. Nay, its evidence he will the better appreciate from the witness within. God’s mind he will more clearly see in the revelation to Moses. Beatitudes to him will take the place of threats, and the discipline there set forth for the family and the state, in their relations to an earthly kingdom and a chosen tribe, will have deeper significance when interpreted from a higher point of view,

and applied to the whole race of man as subjects of an eternal kingdom.

The witness of nature and the witness of the Law he will receive, confirming them by a spiritual faith and an enlightened conscience, and saved from the superstitious nature-worship and the lifeless legalism which have been the bane of so many nations and souls. He will not, like the Oriental, so often imitated by the dreamers of our time, — he will not lose nature and man in God, nor, like the Greek and certain hero-worshippers now, will he lose God in nature and man. The God of nature and of man he will adore, taught by his works, taught by his law, taught above all by Jesus Christ, his manifested Word, and by the Spirit, Christ's own witness within the breast.

To each soul, let the subject so specific as well as enlarged make its appeal, and from each win its response, — a response at once individual, as corresponding to each experience, and universal, as confirming the faith of the Church for ages. The witnesses of God are before us in nature, — so fair with vernal beauty each year, as when the Pentecost came, — in the divine law declared by Moses and fulfilled in Christ. Is there not another witness within us, speaking in the name of all that is best in our own faculties and affections, all that is most winning and august in the revealed Father, of a realm not seen by mortal eye, and of a peace not of this world. Who is utterly a stranger to this experience? Who has been true to it as he ought, and kept the heavenly visitant ever in his soul? Who is there who need not still crave more of the peace of the Comforter, and

deem no lot dark that is enlightened by such presence and no condition tolerable that is unsolaced by such grace?

Consult every variety of Christian experience, look to each of the great divisions of the Church, and do we not find proof of the same indwelling Spirit? With some, the chief reliance is in the authority of the priesthood, and the Church is their favorite watchword. But they who boast of having St. Peter's successor on their central ecclesiastical throne have furnished noble examples of a faith less doubtful than their priestly pedigrees, and their worthiest men have been conspicuous examples of that interior piety whose indwelling witness Peter so felt and so proclaimed at the great Pentecost. Others, a vast company, who make small account of the priestly authority of the Church, identify piety with dogmatic belief, and their rallying-cry is the doctrine as set forth by their Augustines and Calvins, nominally after the manner of St. Paul. Among these, too, there has been proof of a spiritual presence less disputable than any theological theory, and far more deeply pervaded with that Apostle's living faith. Others, a perhaps vaster company, of every name and nation, have made the Spirit the first element of their religion, and, following the disciple whom Jesus loved, have sought the Spirit in and through the life. To them belong a choice band among the great thinkers of the early Church, and a great and increasing host of modern theologians. In quarters strangely diverse in name, the same views of the interior life have prevailed, and a churchman like Fénelon and a leveller like George Fox, a philosopher of nature like Swedenborg and a champion of

humanity like Channing, are found uniting their influence in lines gradually approximating, and under the leading of Providence raising the new Church, which promises to be the mother of all by consecrating all true uses by a divine faith, and by opening a path for the Divine Spirit throughout all life.

Not alone, not timidly, then, does the Christian urge the promise of the witnessing Spirit. An innumerable company join in the appeal, confirming Christ's word by their own experience. The hymns and prayers of faith for ages swell the testimony. And above all and in all, a voice from the unseen realm completes the sanction, and the Spirit saith, "Come." Let him that heareth say, Come. Come to us with our first thought of religion and abide with us to the last breath. Thou Heavenly Comforter, come in our childhood, and, before we know what it is to reason upon spiritual things, give us in every Christian sentiment and prayer an assurance of heavenly truth deeper than any reasoning. Come to us nearer still in our youth, and, when the passions begin to develop their force, subdue them into peace. Come in our manhood, and, with the sad experience of worldly care, mingle a rising and deepening sense of the interior kingdom where dwells the solace for all weariness. Come in our declining age, and, as earthly light fades, brighten within us the uncreated light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Abide with us ever, the living witness that Immanuel is an imperishable power and that God now is with men.

XV.

THE THEOLOGIAN AND THE WORLD TO COME.

No fact is more obvious in the history of mankind, than the recognition of an invisible world and invisible powers. The form of the recognition may vary, but the fact always remains the same. The benighted heathen who bows down before a stone, and the enlightened Christian who adores the Father of spirits, both acknowledge their own dependence and insufficiency, — both recognize the existence of an unseen realm. The grandest and most enduring monuments which have come to us from former ages, whether in literature or architecture, whether Shaster, Koran, or Bible, whether pagoda, temple, mosque, or minster, bear witness to the same truth, and through all ages make the same great confession.

The commanding minds of our race join with them in their testimony. Not one in the front rank of men can be mentioned who has denied the invisible power or the relation of man to the invisible world. As we close these discursive essays upon God's providence in the religious training of mankind, how can we help feeling the force of all this testimony? We cannot believe that God has ever left himself without a witness in the world, much less can we believe that

the Christian Church has ever been wholly bereft of the light of life. We do not indeed ask, and cannot expect, that the same kind of supernatural illumination should be continued during the established rule of the Divine kingdom as attended the creative age of its miraculous foundation. Yet in a serious and profound sense, all history is the book of Providence, and the Church in all ages is a witness of the Word and the Spirit of God. I do not propose in this essay to enter into an elaborate argument upon the authority of the Church, or the merits of the leading theologians who characterize its various parties or dispositions. I am content at present with taking a very cursory survey of the leading views that have been held by theologians and churches regarding the way of peace with God, or the method of salvation.

What is the true relation between man and the invisible world? What must we be or do in order to stand upon true terms with that unseen realm whose existence none can deny? How shall we win the present favor and future welcome of the great Invisible Sovereign? How shall we shun the pains and woes which our own experience here below teaches us are not limited to the body, but may attach to our spiritual nature, and therefore continue in a spiritual world? Questions like these we have all at some time asked, and shall probably ask them still more earnestly in emergencies that are to come. They have been asked by all who have gone before us, and by none have been considered with more solemnity than by the gifted minds whom Providence has raised up to be masters in theology and guides in the Church. What light can they give us? Wherein do they differ,

and wherein do they agree with one another, and with him whom they all called Master and Lord?

This august band of Christian thinkers divides itself into three leading classes, according to the idea most prominent in their systems. Imagine them standing before us here,—the whole company of theologians from Origen and Tertullian down to Edwards and Swedenborg, Neander and Channing,—and called to state their view of the way of life, the true relation between man and God. A division of them would at once be made, and three different but by no means hostile groups would appear. Let us survey them.

Not behind either of the two others in zeal, and far beyond them in the imposing display of authority and ceremonial, stands the party whose main power is in the priesthood, and whose watchword is the "Church." Hildebrand, that son of the swineherd, who raised the mitre above the crown, and put his foot upon the neck of kings, belongs fitly at their head, and near him are Cyprian, Ambrose, Gregory the First, Bernard, Jerome, Loyola, and around him are an innumerable host of prelates, priests, monks, theologians, soldiers, statesmen, kings. Not very far from him are many who virtually favor his principles whilst they reject his power, and claim for the bishop's mitre an authority almost equal to what he claimed for the Pope's crown.

The party thus presenting itself has very little hesitation in deciding upon the nature of the powers of the world to come, and of man's true relation to them. According to them, their Church is to men the kingdom of God, and its priests are powers of the world

to come. Her traditions are infallible truths, her ministers have supernatural power, and her sacraments are the means of eternal life. God is with her and through her only to be approached. Beyond her borders no salvation is to be found. This doctrine has been asserted by many of the wisest and best of mankind, and has been believed undoubtedly by the great majority of nominal Christians. It has stamped itself upon Christendom, and has in its behalf the sublimest monuments that the world contains. Trace out the central principle of the system based upon this doctrine, and we are startled at once by its strangeness and its power. The central principle is sacramental grace, beginning with Baptism and continued in the Mass, that rite which professes literally to repeat Christ's sacrifice, to offer to the believer supernatural food, even the body and blood of the Son of God, and through this to insure to him eternal life. Do any say that it is impossible to believe that this rite can have such power? Read history and then say; look around and see how millions are still governed in matters of faith, and then say. Say, as we must, that not merely in name, but practically, millions have regarded and do regard the Mass as the central and essential power that keeps the soul in true communion with the powers of the world to come. Take this away, and the whole hierarchy falls at once from its miraculous position. Tradition loses its force in the loss of its great mystery, the priesthood loses its authority in the loss of its great wonder-working function, and the ritual loses its exclusive prerogative in losing its supernatural virtue.

Take that majestic monument of the Middle Ages which Christians of every denomination are now fond of copying in their sacred edifices. What was it that reared of old the Gothic cathedral? What but the Mass, the doctrine of the bodily presence of God in the wine and wafer consecrated by the priest, and always kept in the sanctuary upon the altar. Accept this doctrine and the stately minster in all its beautiful and sublime proportions becomes clear to us. The sovereign of the world to come is represented as bodily present in the consecrated elements and the officiating priests; and the whole temple in its upward lines, its mystic light, its spectral sculptures and paintings, its mural tablets and sepulchral vaults, gives but so many various expressions of the great central idea of the bodily presence of God, and the nothingness of the world that now is, in comparison with that which is to come.

Now of this whole system which has thus been materialized in majestic monuments, what shall we say? Call it blasphemy or idolatry, and consign its votaries to the world of woe? Not so. Many of the wisest and most spiritual believers have held to its doctrines, and lived and died in their defence. As viewed by them, the system appeared eminently spiritual, and tended in their view to call forth all that was best in their souls. But this we must say, that there is great peril in any system that attaches such mysterious and exclusive importance to externals, and that the foulest superstitions and enormities have been practised by those cherishing such faith, and interposing priestly absolution and transubstantiated bread between themselves and the Divine tribunal. This

we must also say to the mighty company who give to any external church exclusive power over men in their relations to the world to come, and who plead the imposing array of their saints, martyrs, and sages, often so devoted in piety, so gifted in mind and learning: — “What we reverence in these persons is not in our view to be identified with their system. It is but essential Christianity under the ecclesiastical garb. What in them we regard as good and saving, is but the simple Christianity of Christ and the New Testament. We would take the essential, and spare the non-essential. Let Christ be the test. To us there is little congeniality between the Saviour of the world as portrayed in the Evangelists and as presented in the pageants of the priesthoods. Whatever has been Christlike in the ages of the great hierarchy we may honor, and claim like honor for all that was Christlike in the age of primitive simplicity or the era of Protestant freedom. We bow not in deference to Hildebrand, or any of his majestic company. We look elsewhere for the powers of the world to come, and our love of mental liberty works in harmony with our views of Scripture against the dominion of the priesthood.”

We look elsewhere, and we cannot look long without perceiving another party which is equally ready to give us what we seek. Of this party we cannot but have known some of the most august leaders. The most prominent of them are modern, although there are many of the primitive and middle ages who have affinity with them. They lay claim to Augustine as their theological leader, and Anselm as a powerful ally. Their modern chief is Calvin, and near him

stand Knox, Gomarus, Howe, Owen, Edwards, and a host of names of not much less degree. Their main position is clear. Their central principle lies not in the authority of the Church called Catholic, but of the dogma, the Doctrine called Orthodox. I accuse them not of neglecting other things, but surely they insist most upon their doctrine, and urge this emphatically for its influence on the life. Their doctrine is explicit. They do not regard the church as establishing the creed, but the creed as constituting the true church, — not the true order as coming from Apostolic succession, but Apostolic succession as coming from the true order. Doctrinal orthodoxy is their chief trust, and this they generally deem as sufficient, with Heaven's blessing, to convert a man to Christianity, although no priest grant his blessing and no temple open its doors. The main thing in this doctrinal orthodoxy is faith in the vicarious sacrifice of the Incarnate God as the ground of acceptance or salvation. This faith is as prominent in this system as the Mass is in the hierarchical system. By this faith Christ's righteousness is thought to be imputed for justification, as by the Catholic it is thought to be imparted by sacramental grace.

This doctrinal orthodoxy has done mighty things, and reared up noble intellects and characters. The man who derides this fact must be very ignorant or very heartless. It made its mighty protest against the papal despotism, manfully rescued the care of souls from priestly exclusiveness, and claimed for the direct and sovereign grace of God, and this alone, the prerogative of granting forgiveness and life. Due honor to this party as it was in the days of the great

Reformers and their Puritan successors! Honor to whatever of pure zeal and earnest conviction they manifest now!

But shall we agree with them? No, we cannot. We cannot believe that the way, much less the only way, of reconciliation with the Eternal Power lies through this doctrinal orthodoxy, nor can we regard the mercy of God as reaching to those alone who approach him trusting solely in the vicarious sacrifice of his Son. We cannot limit the Scripture doctrine of faith in Christ by any such theory, nor confine the hope of such salvation within any such narrow borders. We honor the good Calvinist just as we honor the good Catholic, not for his peculiar system, but for his Christian character; not because he is a Calvinist, but because he is a Christian, and shows that proof of true Christianity which the Master requires of all, and which has been given without sole reference to ritual or doctrine. The remarks already made upon the theology of St. Paul are sufficient to explain our views of faith in Christ, in connection with the Calvinistic scheme of Atonement.

Thus we resist the importunities of the party of the Doctrine, as we did those of the Priesthood. We yield no more to Calvin than to Hildebrand, no more to Edwards than to Bossuet. We make the armed Puritan, Cromwell, no more our model of faith and practice, than the Crusader, St. Louis. We look still further for an answer to our question, What must we be and do to stand in true relations with the powers of the world to come?

A third party, or rather a third class of persons, much less forward than the two already mentioned,

remain, and they stand ready to give their answer. Some of them come out quite boldly, whilst others hang back doubtfully; and moreover, not a few in the ranks of the other parties look to this with apparent sympathy, as if hesitating whether to join its ranks or not.

The characteristic word is not the Priesthood, not the Doctrine, but the Spirit and the Life. To them the powers of the world to come are most represented not so much by priesthoods, dogmas, and ceremonies, as by principles, affections, and works. To them the kingdom of God is moral and spiritual. Its central fact is not the Mass, not the doctrine of vicarious justification, but the life, — the life as it was from God in Christ, and as it may be in the disciple through faith and love. All ages have furnished noble confessors of this system, if such it can be called. It was proclaimed intrepidly in the primitive times; it shines out clearly from the eloquent and learned pages of Clement and Origen, and all those early theologians who look upon St. John as the type of true discipleship; it lurks under the cowl of many a pious devotee, the stately robes of many a high-minded priest, upon whose lips and pen the papal power had put its seal of silence. It beams upon us from the meditations of A Kempis and the devotions of Fénelon. Fox and Penn asserted it in all its length and breadth, and have found no mean response from the most earnest hearts of our own day. Swedenborg saw it clearly through all the haze of his mystical visions, and Channing consecrated his eloquent pen to its defence. Bunsen finds time to teach it amidst the pressure of diplomatic care, and Bushnell is not afraid to assert

it among the pertinacious inquisitors who seek to play the old game upon a new ground.

Now we claim no infallibility for those who have asserted this principle, — no freedom from frailty for those who have professed to make it the basis of their practice. But we must acknowledge our hearty conviction of the worth of the great principle itself, and without disparaging church or doctrine, we must earnestly say that, in the Christianity of Christ and the New Testament, the spirit is the paramount thing, and the life is the great test and channel of the spirit. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, nor doctrine either, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Under every form of church organization and all honest diversities of, doctrine, righteousness, peace, and joy have appeared, and not by any means to the least extent among those who have been cast out as schismatics or heretics. The giant evils that curse society have been most vehemently rebuked by men who have been by no means of the party of the ritual or the dogma, whilst many who have been honored or sainted for their defence of hierarchy or creed have outraged every principle of Christian morality, and walked through bloodshed and oppression to dominion. If we were to select for example a practical man, a statesman, as an exemplar of true Christianity, it would not be so easy to find a fitting specimen among the champions of the priesthood or of the doctrine, as among those of the spirit. The Gospel as it stands in the New Testament would oblige us to pass by many an ecclesiastical leader and dogmatic champion to honor some Christian Independents like the Plymouth Pilgrims, who were as

little in bondage to the Genevan doctors as to the English bishops, or like William Penn and his company of Friends, who honored the spirit and the life above the priesthood and the creed, and who were therefore imprisoned by the powers of the priesthood and cursed by the men of the doctrine.

We need to insist upon the practical Christianity of the New Testament alike in its spirit and in the life. True indeed it is, as the priests of the church and the champions of the doctrine say, that it is not enough to commend the spirit and the life, but that we need external aids and positive truths in order to have the spirit and win the life. True it is that we must have church union and have definite views of doctrine. Yet let church union be of the Christian stamp, a fraternal association of believers in Christ, and let our doctrine be the practical religion of the New Testament, and not the devices of dogmatists or the subtilities of metaphysicians. We have not a single word to say now against prevalent church organizations or creeds, but rather rejoice that they seem to be the means of awakening and cherishing a true Christian spirit in many hearts. But we prefer to give paramount emphasis to the life rather than the form or the doctrine. It is the life that opens heaven or closes its gates, — the life that gives the soul communion with God and Christ and the spirits of the just, or that else binds the soul down to the dust in companionship with spirits of darkness.

Errors in life are the worst of all errors. They are of the heart and corrupt the whole man, and cannot remain long without corrupting the intellect also. True life is true prayer, and without it the prayer of

the lips brings little benediction. This is the New Testament doctrine. That men might have life and have it more abundantly, Jesus came upon his divine mission, and bade men through him seek the Father and derive the true spirit of Sonship. This is indeed life, life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

The path toward the favor of the powers of the world to come is thus pointed out. The true use of the life that now is, is the way to win the true joy of the life that is to be hereafter. And when this true use is faithfully made, then both lives join in one, as all spiritual men have said. God dwells with man in no ambiguous manner, and heaven is opened on earth. So far at least as true Christian souls are concerned, the Scripture is fulfilled, and the kingdoms of this world are become as the kingdoms of God and his Christ.

I hope that I am aware of the family likeness that marks all the varieties of Christian believers who are earnest and sincere. I would not be guilty of the folly of limiting the knowledge and practice of spiritual religion to any sects or classes of men who profess to have made important advances in the work of separating transient forms and opinions from the permanent truths of Christianity. The Liberal Christian can from his own point of view appreciate the leading aim of the Catholic and the Calvinist, and yet keep his own ground. He accepts Christ as a communication of Divine life so cordially as to sympathize somewhat with the Catholic's ritual interpretation of imparted righteousness, and he feels strongly enough the need of a Divine Saviour as the rock of

his trust to understand in a good sense the Calvinist doctrine of the faith that justifies by putting the believer upon the just grounds and setting him to work there. Yet he is sadly limited by their technicalities, and gladly recurs to the liberty which the spirit of the Lord gives.

We indorse then most heartily the leading principles of those who maintain the superiority of the spirit and the life over the priesthood and the creed. In this declaration multitudes of Christians of every name are ready to go with us, wearied as they are with exclusive systems of ceremony and dogmatism. There is something in the spirit of the age, this strange nineteenth century, that does not refuse response. Bustling and utilitarian as our century is, so prone to make a god of gold, and to frequent banks and exchanges beyond chapels and churches, so apt, as many say, to honor the lords of the treasury above the lords of the mitre and the coronet, there is not a little disposition to take account of the powers of the world to come. There is something even in the inventions of the age that startles men as with a sense of the invisible powers, and matter itself in its more subtle agencies seems to border upon spiritual mysteries. The great industrial arrangements of society are assuming a religious importance and solemnity. It is becoming obvious that the mind and heart of Christendom are to be engaged as never before in a serious consideration of the welfare of the nations. The cry from the heart of thousands, and almost of nations, is for a more practical Christianity, a religion that shall consecrate to true and humane uses the vast resources of art and science. The re-

ligion of the cloister and of the schools will not do. Christianity must go forth in its power, cast down the master-evils that curse mankind, and apply its healing agencies alike to body and soul, social interests as well as individual needs and sins. Let this be done, and we shall not complain of industry, art, and science as lacking spirituality or even ideality. To the doer of good, active and vigorous, heaven shall be far nearer than ever to the emaciated hermit or to the dogmatic theologian. The two worlds shall meet together, and by the true spirit and life man shall hold communion with God and Christ, and own with gladness the powers of the world to come.

Cheering it is, indeed, to mark the accordance of all the deep and powerful thinkers of our time in the conviction that man's true life is not in himself, but in God; and whatever be the faculty in question, whether thought or emotion or will, the faculty is empty, if not dead, when it is not filled with a grace beyond itself, and does not rejoice to live and move and have its being in the Father of spirits who has so revealed himself in his Word. We are not by any means disposed to despair of the great and increasing host of persons and powers that now stand, if not outside the ranks, certainly outside the authority of the prominent priesthoods and orthodoxy of Christendom. How sadly impoverished mankind would be, if bereft of the literature, science, philosophy, freedom, humanity, and piety which now hold a position wholly independent of ecclesiastical dictation! We are strongly inclined to believe that the Church of the Future will receive some of its best endowments from men and principles little honored by the Church of the

Past and the Present. Christ is always the same, yet opinions ever differ. There are and have been many theologies. The true theology is that which best interprets the one religion which Christ taught in the life.

As we take leave of our subject, and of the honored minds who have been made to furnish illustrations, let us simply sum up what has been said, and give our closing judgment of the three leading divisions of Christendom by a parting glance at the majestic company whose lives we have been interrogating in this essay. They come before us with all their peculiarities of time and nation and creed and form. They connect the age of the Apostles with our own century, and present the most commanding points of view for the survey of Christendom through that eventful interval. Let their images rise before us now, and move us anew to reverence for their piety and charity. Let them aid in forming our judgments of this world and the world to come. Let us imagine each great class of them to choose one man from their number as the most prominent exemplar of the Christian qualities most honored by them. I will not presume to say upon what individuals the choice would fall, yet one may state without the least doubt the kind of character upon whom it would fall, for the choice has been made and expressed, times without number, according as the priesthood, the dogma, or the life has been the preëminent idea.

Let the Priesthood called "Catholic" choose their most saintly man as they deem him to be. We look at once into the cell of the monk. He has given up this world for the world to come. Beside him is the

scourge with which he lashes to the quick the flesh to which he ascribes such corruption. Before him stand the skull and cross-bones to remind him of his mortality. His bed is the cold stone floor; his dress is coarse, and bound with a girdle that pierces his skin; his food is of lentils, and even of that he eats sparingly. His life is prayer. He is as if dead to the world. The food of angels he glories in receiving, as he takes the consecrated wafer. His vigils are not unvisited, as he thinks, by heavenly friends, and his life, half dreaming, half wakeful, seems hovering between two worlds. He goes down into the crypt of the monastery or church among tombs and skeletons, and is not startled as he contemplates the niche among the brethren of his order which he soon must fill. Such is the noted saint of the ages called preëminently ages of faith, whose blessing kings have sought and whose name conclaves have canonized. This spectral being dead to earth is their exemplar of the truest relation to the world to come.

Let the champions of the Doctrine choose, and we behold a different character. In the pulpit or the study he shows the same characteristics. He is a strong-minded, austere man. In his view the world and man have fallen under the Divine curse. In humility and anguish he has felt the curse within his own soul. On the brink of a fiery gulf he has been arrested by the only hand that could save him. The pains that he deserved have been transferred to another, and solely by faith in the expiatory sacrifice of a Saviour God for him has he received pardon and hope. He urges ever the same great doctrine, and to him existence has one absorbing interest, the lead-

ing souls to like faith and like rescue from despair. He is a man of many virtues, rules his household with an austerity not without love, and strives to cast down every power, whether priestly or worldly, that arrays itself against God. Yet there is a gloom over his soul, for his hope sadly limits the triumphs of heavenly mercy. And in his manner there is a sternness that chills those whom he does not overawe. He seems hardly of this earth, nor yet quite of heaven. He bears himself as a representative of the powers of the world to come, as he interprets their blessing and their doom.

Let the champions of the Spirit and the Life choose, and their choice is little doubtful. We behold at once a man among men, striving to connect all the uses of this world with the sanctions of a better, — recognizing beauty and consecration in all the works of God, — giving society, government, literature, labor, religion, all their due, and earnest to serve God in all things. He cherishes Christianity in its spiritual purity and practical principles with entire liberty of conscience, yet neglects not the Christian assembly, nor disparages the teachings of its ministers and the simple ordinances authorized by the Saviour and expressive of his spirit. He looks upon Christ as the image of God, the Word made flesh, and endeavors in all things to revere the God thus manifested. He is a man of prayer, calling on the Father in the secret chambers of his own soul, and at all times ascribing all good gifts to his loving kindness. He keeps his body free from intemperate excess, his soul free from evil passions. He walks as a friend and brother, speaking the truth in love and looking upon his

talents and goods as but confided to his stewardship. He is hopeful and active, yet far more earnest to put down great vices than to hunt out heresies and schisms. To him the worst heresy is in the form of a lie, and the most fatal schism is a spirit of hatred. He lives as in the kingdom of God on earth, and by a life of peace and good-will hopes to reach, not by merit, but by God's grace, acceptance hereafter. Such is a man of the spirit and the life. Such are the three classes of Christians in their model men. How shall we choose between them?

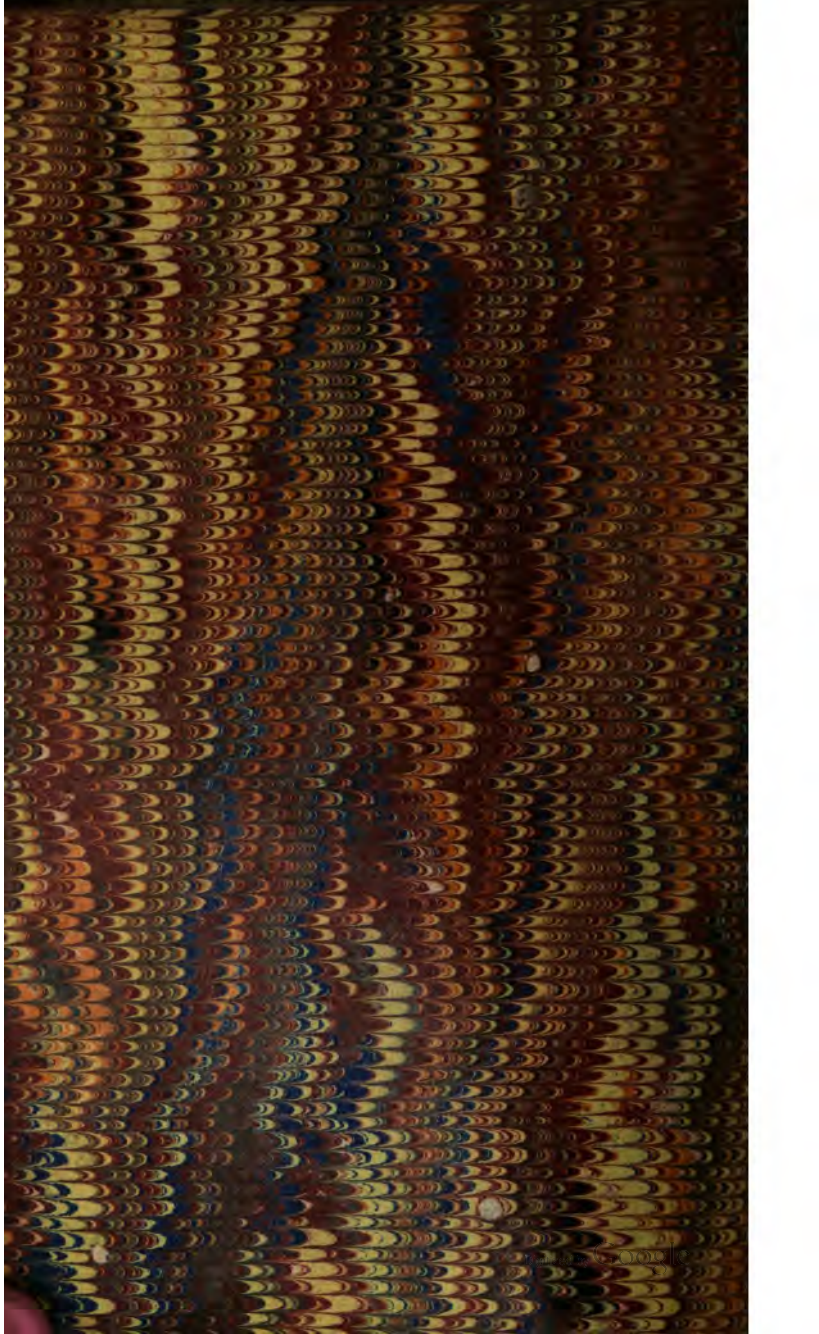
I will not choose for others at all, but simply give an illustration which unites the three in one, for it is a tradition of the old Church that I once found in the pages of an orthodox Protestant, Jeremy Taylor I believe, and expressing the favorite sentiment of those who urge most the spirit and the life. No reader will fail to see its meaning.

A devotee in his cell after hours of prayer at last thought that his petitions were granted, and Christ in beatific vision stood before him; but in a moment the convent-bell sounded, and the poor man, almost distracted at leaving his divine visitant. thus, rose from his knees at the call of duty, and went to provide for the guest who had just come to the gate for shelter. He did his duty, and then returned to his cell with a heart warm with charity yet heavy with grief. He went back, and lo! there stood that same divine presence, radiant with a still more benign smile, and a voice spoke: "If thou hadst not left me, I had left thee; and because thou didst leave me at the call of duty, thou hast found me now that thy duty is done." To the well-doer heaven was nearer

than before, and work was the fruit and the inspiration of faith and prayer.

Even so let Christ and heaven come near, — near in faith and devotion, — near in love and good works. The life of God in the soul will then be the best comment upon the Word of God in Christ.

THE END.



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